

VOL. 25 NO. 2

JUNE

1908

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THE SMART SET

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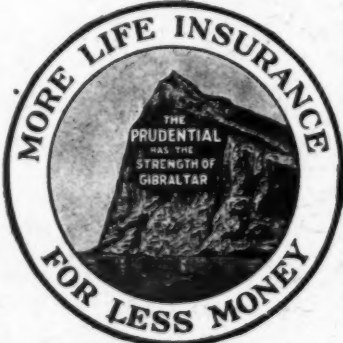
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THE STRAND MAGAZINE

Summary of Contents for May, 1908.

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Reminiscences and Reflections of Sir John Hare

the Actor. Written with a force and style that compels the interest of the reader in every line.

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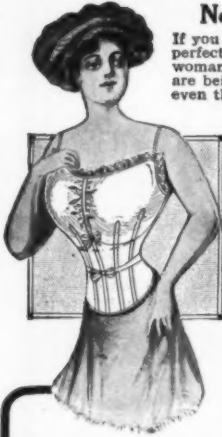
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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. XXV

JUNE, 1908

No. 2

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YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION \$2.50

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Entered at New York Post-Office as second-class mail matter

Issued monthly by Ess Ess Publishing Company, 452 Fifth Avenue, New York

It is requested that all MSS. be addressed to The Editor

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AGAIN

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THE BRIARCLIFF TROPHY

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The Briarcliff Race Score Tells the Tale.

(From N. Y. Times, April 25, 1908.)

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*Still running. †Ditched. ‡Driver hurt. §Collapsed wheel. ¶Cracked cylinder.

After listening to an animated discussion over the result of the Briarcliff trophy race last Friday the chairman of the grievance committee of the Flat Tire Club delivered the following dictum yesterday concerning big road races: "In every race there are always three winners, the real winner, the moral winner and the near winner," which brought to a full stop an argument as to whether or not Cedrino and his Fiat could have overtaken and passed Strang and his Isotta-Fraschini if the contest had been ten rounds of the course instead of eight.

H. S. Johnson, secretary of the Automobile Club of St. Louis, is in New York speaking.

Study the performances of the three Isotta Fraschinis. Note the positions they won, the fast laps they made, and the cars they beat.

In every road race of 1908 the Isotta Fraschinis gave a convincing demonstration of

ENDURANCE.

Louis Strang won Briarcliff Trophy race for stock cars, Westchester, N. Y., April 24, 1908, over most difficult course ever attempted in automobile racing, covering 259.2 miles in 5h. 14m. 13.1-5s., averaging 46.15 miles per hour.

RELIABILITY.

Louis Strang won Savannah Cup for stock cars, March 19, 1908, negotiating 342 miles of tortuous road in 6h. 21m., 30s. an average of 50.7 miles per hour, beating his nearest competitor 23m. 7s. In this race the fastest lap was scored by Al Poole, who drove an Isotta Fraschini 17.1 miles at the rate of 61.94 miles per hour.

SPEED.

Trucco won Padova-Boloventa race, at Venice, April 5, 1908, averaging 76 miles per hour, finishing four minutes ahead of Nazorro's Fiat and also beating two cars each of the following makes: Bianchi, Zusta, Rapid, S. P. A. and Junior. Minoia, also driving an Isotta Fraschini, was second, averaging 75 miles an hour. Trucco's average is a world's record for so low a powered car as the Isotta Fraschini he drove, which was but a 45-h. p. chassis.

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HORS-D'ŒUVRES

By Austin Adams

I

OCCASIONAL peeps into the narrow strip of mirror between the windows left no room for doubt; she was slowly but surely being reduced to total ruin. Even before the only other woman—a timid little widow in depressingly fresh weeds and with dark rings around her red eyes—had got off at El Nido, leaving her alone with that horrid little yellow Mexican manikin, Miss Mettleby had begun to feel the insidious advance of general degeneration. All day the Pullman had been a gehenna of hot dust, not ordinary heat nor common-organ dust, but the sort of heat that wilts the soul, and the bitter, biting powdered alkali that percolates through one's moral fiber and clogs with the grit of despair the bearings of self-respect and good taste, be they never so well lubricated with the oil of conceit.

The morning had been bad enough, but after the widow had left the train, thereby depriving Miss Mettleby of the immense assurance which one woman's presence affords another, matters grew desperately worse. The line wound for hours through a canyon filled with dead, superheated air, dry, thick with pulverized death—everything in the blighted valley seemed to have died, even the river that must once have gouged out the zigzag channel filled with polished round stones—and what glimpses of sky could be got above the jagged and sunbaked cliffs showed heavy and hot and crushing as though heaven was no longer a thing of light and distance, but a terrible menace of

metal about to fall. And that horrid little yellow manikin! The widow had scarcely gone when he deliberately moved into the forward seat in his compartment, whence he could stare at the tall American girl who had thrice refused to notice general observations he had made about the heat, the scenery, and the insufferably slow time the train was making.

He seemed a gentleman and the stare which he bestowed upon Miss Mettleby was one of embarrassing admiration. That was the worst of it, she felt, for the smirking little gallant had not entered the car until long after the heat and the dust and that feeling of final woe had done their fatalest; therefore she knew that his adoring glances were those of a gay deceiver. But the mirror did not lie; it was not Latin-American. She was a wreck! The very few but very real freckles on the bridge of her rather aristocratic nose glowed assertively through successive strata of dust, cinders, and violet talcum; she could feel the prickly grit sifting down through the fluffy collapse which had been a Countess Potocka pompadour in the early morning, to dissolve at last and trickle down her flaming neck in the little rivulets flowing spontaneously from her temples and behind her tiny pink ears; and—now that it was too late—she regretted not having listened to Jessie and Aunt Ella. Jess had strongly advised her to wear her *écru* taffeta shirt-waist; and Aunt Ella had called her a little goose for starting on any such crazy expedition. Always bound to have her own way, Miss Mettleby had worn her sole Parisian importation—an open-work yoke, cool,

very *chic*, and modestly revealing her superb neck and shoulders; but through the open-work she could now both see and feel the aforesaid rivulets tracing their sticky and mussy way across unget-at-able expanses of itchy shoulders and parboiled bosom. And as for the crazy expedition—every instant brought its craziness into higher light.

As the train—three hours late in leaving Los Angeles—had continued to lose time between all the stations and could not possibly reach Boca del Toro before sundown, which should have been reached at one o'clock, Miss Mettleby had plenty of time in which to reflect. Reflection was not a favorite pastime with Miss Mettleby. Until that telegram, six weeks ago, had announced cataclysm, and poor old Jess and she had suddenly found themselves in the unthinkable position of having to "do something," Madge Mettleby had had but to wish a thing, to have all the necessary wheels of accomplishment begin to revolve delightfully at her bidding. Of course old Mr. Hardcastle, their former guardian and present attorney, had to be "consulted," as he put it, but such consultation was invariably had after a step had been not only decided upon, but taken.

Apart, therefore, from the disturbing nature of her present reflections, the very fact that she had to think, to meditate, to try to forecast the (now sternly practical) future, and that a heart-breaking day shut up in a suffocating car simply forced her to do it now, drove her nearly wild. For the first time since the telegram, she began to realize something of the meaning of the staggering change which had come into her life; for the first time since she sent off that harum-scarum letter—at the time a mere hysterical fling indulged in just to relieve the pressure and to save Jessie's very life—she began to wonder if, after all, Aunt Ella had not been right, and the whole thing a ridiculous fiasco with possibly sinister depths lying beneath.

The whole thing was, of course, preposterously funny; but since the bishop

himself had assured Aunt Ella that the Estobals of the great "Todos Santos" rancheria, a domain big enough to make a very respectable European principality, were the *crème de la crème* of the genuine old Spanish Californians, and Señor Juan Pedro Estobal's letters were models of elegant and delicate epistolary correspondence, there really could be nothing to fear—except, of course, the new sensation of finding oneself a girl who has to "do something." Still, were there not millions of girls who had to "do something"? And if one has to do something, surely nothing could be pleasanter than "to just be a mother," as Juan Pedro had repeatedly put it, to a "little angel who, by the way, is far more American than Spanish, since, thank God! she inherits her poor dear mother's, rather than her father's qualities."

Fishing in her bag for the sadly overworked powder-puff, Madge spied the little packet of models of elegant and delicate correspondence, and with a sense of still redder cheeks she took the letters out. Tucked under the rubber band was the fateful clipping from the Los Angeles paper, in which, in stilted old-world phrases, Señor Estobal advertised for a governess. The sight of the clipping sent Madge off into the deepest depths of reflection and lugubrious reminiscence. How it all came back to her!—the telegram, Jessie's collapse, Aunt Ella's explosion, and Madge's own grim effort to save the day by snatching up her hat and singing out to the two weeping wretches that she would go into Los Angeles and get "something to do"—or they need never speak to her again! The Estobal "ad" had caught her eye, and the history of the last month was the result.

Letting the bundle of letters lie unheeded on her lap, Madge suffered her mind to run back every step in the unfolding fate which had brought her to her present state of melodramatic absurdity. Not longer ago than last Autumn—and it was only early February now—she and Jess, under the wing of Aunt Ella, had taken one of

the loveliest villas in Pasadena for the Winter, glad to escape at least one of those killingly delightful seasons in New York, although, at first, it was a bit hard to read about the Horse Show and then the Opera and then the Freddy Lispenards' ball and then the Gladys Pell-Earl of Dunborough wedding, three thousand miles away. Then the telegram! Then Mr. Hardcastle's tenderly expressed but simply crushing letter, stating that the Amsterdam Trust Company had gone under, and that for an indefinite time, instead of receiving their monthly cheque for a thousand dollars apiece, she and Jess would receive nothing!

The bolt had flattened Jess out into utter helplessness bordering upon nervous ruin, and dear old peppery Aunt Ella flew off the handle and was for having Mr. Hardcastle arrested by long-distance wire. But Madge—until today she had not quite realized at what cost—Madge had thrown herself on the couch, pummeled the sofa pillows, ordered tea, thumped the "Pilgrims' Chorus" on the piano, defied all the demons of poverty, and rushed off, laughing uproariously, to Los Angeles, "to find something to do." When she answered the unique Estobal advertisement she thought no farther than that waiting for the impossible reply might serve to fill up the gruesome first few days in the shabby-genteel boarding-house to which they had retreated with their fourteen trunks, Jess's blue-ribbon Persian cat, Aunt Ella's feelings of revenge, and the eleven hundred and odd dollars which, between them, they found they still had. But when Señor Juan Pedro Estobal's letter arrived Madge succumbed to her inborn craving for new experiences, and—here she was!

She slipped off the rubber band and began to look over those matchless letters. As she read one after another she felt as though she had patronized a matrimonial bureau and was now on her way to meet the "rich widower, forty, total abstainer, dark eyes and hair, lonely, affectionate," who desired to make the acquaintance of young

lady of twenty-two, blond, kind to children and pets; references exchanged, also photos.

She had not actually sent her photograph, but Juan Pedro had sent his—a really handsome man with big sad Andalusian eyes, too!—and as the correspondence developed he had gradually revealed the sweet, sad story of his life, particularly the last few chapters of it since his wife's death. Madge, too, had yielded to the subtle influence of his amazingly frank letters, and in her later replies she indulged Juan Pedro's curiosity—to say nothing of her own taste for nibbling at the wee small bit of forbidden fruit—by adroitly casting over her perfectly discreet epistles a pervasive atmosphere of dove-colored romance. And Juan Pedro proved that comic opera is true to life, by answering (always by return post) in terms of quickly developing interest, not to say affection. "What Miss Mettleby has deigned to tell me of herself," he wrote in his last letter, "and, still more, the fragrance of the noble character of which I can now read between the lines, fills me with devout gratitude that my poor little 'Loupe is not doomed to remain motherless, nor I myself to eat out my heart here in lonely watching over her."

"Talk about evidence in a breach of promise suit! Just fancy Mr. Hardcastle reading this to the jury and glaring at Juan Pedro over his spectacles!" cried Madge, tossing the letter over to Aunt Ella.

"Scandalous!" remarked Aunt Ella; but all three laughed long and loud just the same; the thickening plot alone made those first weeks in the boarding-house endurable. It was all excruciatingly funny.

That was all very well so long as the plot was being worked out through correspondence only, but as the hours of the terrible journey dragged along Madge began to realize the possibly impossible situation in which she might find herself at its end. And she further realized that she could not even count upon a woman's main reliance—making a good impression at the start. No;

she was sticky, dusty, hot, mad, ill at ease, anything but her usual perfectly groomed and perfectly self-possessed self. She went so far as to ask the conductor when the first train north would pass the next station; and he had told her, "Tomorrow morning at four o'clock!" All was lost.

The sun had dropped behind the high *loma* hemming in the valley on the west when the porter came and announced that they would reach Boca del Toro in ten minutes. She flew into the dressing-room and did what was possible to restore the ruin, and found her traps already being stowed in the vestibule when she emerged. The train stopped, then moved ahead again. They had stopped, the porter said, to drop her trunks on the little platform—there was no station—and when they stopped again the Pullman had reached the platform. Miss Mettleby descended the steps, now in the last stages of uneasiness; the porter set down her suit-case and Gladstone; closed his palm over the dollar she gave him; and swung himself up on the steps as the train moved slowly on.

Madge looked about her. The desert stretched indefinitely to the eastward; westward the hills had melted down into a sierra of red-brown mounds; and not a house was visible anywhere. The train glided by her and just as the observation car passed her she saw the little Mexican gesticulating wildly, evidently in high debate with the conductor, and the next moment the vestibule door was opened, two or three pieces of hand luggage were flung out, and then the manikin, at great risk of breaking himself, hopped down upon the platform. Madge started. All sorts of horrid fears swam through her mind. In a frantic determination not to be left alone in this God-forsaken place with the loathsome creature she waved to the conductor to stop the train, but he merely lifted his cap, and presently only a cloud of dust showed where the last car had disappeared around the curve.

II

PANAMA hat in hand and the tiny tips of patent-leather shoes mincing under his wide, flapping white duck trousers, the manikin approached Miss Mettleby, who stood, shoulders set square and veil drawn well down over her face, a monument of resourceful Innocence, at the extreme end of the platform.

"Eef ze yong lady would permeet one stranger to honor heemself by offering hees assistance?"

The monument of Innocence gave no sign, except to show her resourcefulness by declining the deal and thereby throwing the blushing stranger into considerable confusion and a mild perspiration.

"Pardon me—Señor Dominguez y Aguirra, madame—but I haf haired ze yong lady spicking to ze conductor how far eet ees to ze rancheria of my good friend, Meester Estobal—so I am know zat ze yong lady expect Meester Estobal to meet hair, and—*mira!* no wan ess come for meet ze yong lady."

"I'll walk!" announced Miss Mettleby, her falling inflection and air of aloofness calculated to impress him with the fact that the interview was at an end.

"Walk?" gasped the manikin. "Walk?" His voice died into a whisper of agonized solicitude.

"Why, yes—is it far?" asked Madge, beginning to appreciate both that the absurd little dear was absurd and that he had got off the train—goodness alone knew how far from his own destination—just to offer her his protection. Too funny for anything, but still rather appealing, don't you know.

"Eet ees t'ree leagues—ten miles—lawnlee—weelderness—wizout wan peoples on ze road—yes, farzer as ten miles to 'Todos Santos'—and ze night comes!" He held up his hands in a gesture of sympathetic despair and looked so thoroughly unhappy that Madge almost felt happy again. If he had not been such a ridiculous little dried-up jumping-jack she might have found herself wishing that all men

were a bit more chivalrous, even as these Latin-Americans.

"Gracious! Ten miles? Whatever shall I do? There's some mistake, of course, for surely Señor Estobal could not expect me to walk all of—"

"Naw, naw, naw!" broke in the manikin, his zeal for the honor of a fellow-Latin overcoming his natural disinclination to interrupt. "Surelee zair ees wan beeg mistake—for when you make acquaintance wiz Meester Estobal you weel discover heem a shentleman, very!"

"Certainly—of course—all a mistake—but the question is: What's to be done now?" Dusk was fast deepening under the foothills and Miss Mettleby's tone grew serious.

"Zair ees awnlee wan zing—I weel walk myself to 'Todos Santos!'" He threw out his little chest and the soul of the Cid gleamed in his eyes. "I have ze strong foots, very. In less as four hours comes back Meester Estobal fas', fas', fas', in z'automobile, ah!"

"Oh, but that's too good of you!" cried Madge, unable to resist glancing down at his cute little legs and wondering if he weighed ninety pounds or only eighty-five. He was standing with his arms folded and some sudden problem was wrinkling his brow.

"But I forget," he said presently; "eef I gaw away, ze yong lady ees leff wizout ze protection of my arm; and eef I stay wiz ze yong lady, comes not Meester Estobal in z'automobile! Dios! for wings for ze fly away quicklee like wan bird, eh?"

"No, you must go! Go! Go—please!" cried Madge, striding toward him with a tragic air. There was something about Señor Dominguez y Aguirra which made her feel that she was playing leading lady to his intrepid hero. And anyhow, unless he went, it meant a night of it under the unpynted stars.

"Gaw?" he exclaimed. "Gaw? But eet I gaw, who weel protect you?"

"I am strong and can defend myself!" retorted Miss Mettleby, trying not to laugh in his tortured little face.

"Naw, I can not think of leaving so

yong, so beautiful, so—so— Hark! Deed you not hear some sounds?"

They stopped breathing and listened. Yes, to the eastward and apparently just over the ridge of tawny-colored sand covered with sagebrush, there was certainly an automobile chugging painfully as if in distress. The noise ceased, then began again. In a few seconds it stopped again, then began once more. This time it continued until the big bottle-green tonneau crept painfully over the top of the ridge and came to a final dead stop.

"Zank God!" cried Señor Dominguez y Aguirra when Madge pointed triumphantly toward the car, "eet ees Meester Estobal heemself!"

So saying the manikin hopped off the platform and toddled away to meet Estobal. That gentleman seemed immensely surprised on beholding the Mexican running toward him, but if there was any displeasure connected with the unexpected arrival Juan Pedro Estobal carefully concealed it. In fact, he appeared to be overjoyed, for he sprang from the seat and Madge watched them as the two men embraced each other and stood patting one another's backs. After a brief interchange of Spanish compliments, Madge surmised from their gestures, they began a critical examination of the refractory machine. Señor Dominguez kept poking his little bamboo cane at one bearing and crank and wheel after another, only to have Señor Estobal shake his head. The trouble was not there; whatever ailed the machine, it was no trifling ailment to be thus lightly diagnosed; the malady was deep-seated, constitutional, probably fatal. Finally, they gave up trying to guess which one of the ten thousand possible troubles might be the real one in this case, and walked gravely toward the station, speaking in low tones.

Before they reached her Madge had an opportunity to make a first sketchy estimate of her knight of those unthinkable letters, who was now her—her—a queer feeling ran through her as she realized it—who was now her em-

ployer. Señor Estobal was considerably taller than the manikin, but his slender form seemed wasted almost to the point of being altogether spirit, and his sunken cheeks were sallow and livid. His shoulders stooped painfully and his whole bearing was that of a man whom some nameless burden of sorrow or remorse or suffering had crushed long before his time. In spite of the fresh stains—no doubt the result of his struggles with the machine—his carefully ironed white suit and spotless linen showed him to be a man of nice taste. Below his coat hung the fringed ends of a crimson sash which perfectly matched his loosely tied cravat and the fold of silk around his wide straw hat. As they came nearer, Madge saw that the photograph had not done justice to his eyes; they were magnificent, full of a great hunger or passion, but quite the saddest Madge had ever seen.

"If Miss Mettleby can believe me," murmured Estobal after introducing himself and Señor Dominguez with all the ceremony of a court presentation, "this most embarrassing delay—for which I shall never forgive myself—is due entirely to the fact that I wished to do myself the honor of coming in person to welcome her. You see, I have never attempted to run the automobile before and there appears to be something wrong with the machinery. Have you been waiting very long?"

"Not ten minutes!" laughed Madge reassuringly. She would have waited hours for such a reception. His manners—well, she had never seen anything like them—and his accent was simply delicious. "And then, you know, Señor Estobal, Señor Dominguez went to all the trouble of leaving the train in order that I should not have to wait alone." She beamed upon the manikin and the manikin shot a glance at her which meant, if it meant anything, that nothing could afford him as much pleasure as to die for her at a moment's notice. Also he bowed so low that he almost lost his balance.

"And now shall we go?" asked Madge innocently. "I'm crazy to see the *hacienda*, of which you wrote me

such entrancing descriptions—and to kiss dear little 'Loupe.'

"Yes—certainly—we must be thinking about getting home," stammered Estobal, looking mournfully over toward the stalled car; "but the difficulty is—how to do so."

All three looked at the machine, which, buried axle-deep in the sand, seemed stolidly to defy them to do their worst.

"Perhaps I can find out what the matter is," said Miss Mettleby, "for you know, I have—I mean I used to have—a runabout." Followed by the two men she strode off in the direction of the car; but when half-way there all three stopped. A man had suddenly loomed above the ridge, riding a spirited horse and leading another. As he drew rein beside the abandoned machine his big athletic figure showed clear-cut against the sapphire sky. Madge jumped; visions of polo matches and other thrilling delights of the buried past came back to her. Even at twenty yards she could have sworn that the man on horseback was a—a—well, from God's country and a gentleman. He seemed not to see them approaching him, but to give his exclusive attention to the machine, which, Madge thought, was not very nice of him.

"Thorndyke!" sang out Señor Estobal, clapping his thin hands in delight. "That fellow always appears at the proper moment! Thorndyke, permit me to present you to Miss Mettleby, of whom I have spoken to you."

Thorndyke swung himself easily from his horse and, in perfect form, murmured Miss Mettleby's name. In rather disheartening contrast to Señor Estobal's effusive greeting, however, Mr. Thorndyke betrayed absolutely no pleasure or any other feeling upon meeting her. Still, Miss Mettleby could not help liking him; he stood before her the incarnation of the manhood to which she had been accustomed, rather *blasé*, undemonstrative, self-satisfied, but superbly balanced and, in every inch of his full six feet, masterful. He wore khaki riding-breeches and tan puttees, and the sleeves of his twill shirt were

rolled up above the elbows. Yachting at Bar Harbor, canoeing among the Thousand Islands, tennis and racquet—what did not those tough bare forearms remind her of? Then, too, life in the open had burned him brown, not jaundice nor Latin-American sissiness nor—yes, altogether Mr. Thorndyke was fit. Who was he, she wondered. However, he did not in the least seem to care to know who or what she was.

"And I may ride?" asked Madge, patting the neck of the wiry led horse, after Mr. Thorndyke had explained that he had feared that something had gone wrong with the machine. "I ride to hounds at home, you know."

"But scarcely on a man's saddle," chuckled Thorndyke quietly, "and your tailor-made skirt would not exactly permit you to—"

"No, Miss Mettleby must allow me to ask her to wait here until the carriage comes for her. Señor Dominguez and I will ride off at once to fetch it," interrupted Señor Estobal, while Miss Mettleby turned to look at the orange and gold afterglow. "In the meantime, Thorndyke, I leave you to watch over Miss Mettleby—and to see if you can determine what it is that ails the automobile."

Madge felt a trickle of satisfaction course through her as she heard this arrangement—but she did think that Mr. Thorndyke might have at least acquiesced with better grace. As it was, he merely muttered something about being sure that he could put the machine right. As the two cavaliers in white rode away, putting their steeds through a number of elaborate capers, each of the little men a perfect seat, Madge fell to regretting the fact that what little remained of knightly grace was the exclusive possession of races other than the Anglo-Saxon. To heighten this feeling Thorndyke began immediately to examine the machine, paying not the slightest attention to her nor so much as noticing her when, in grumpy silence, she strolled back to the station. She pulled her suit-case to the edge of the platform and sat on it, sending only an occasional glance over at the big man who had evidently forgotten

her very existence. With rapidly falling spirits she waited and waited until, suddenly, she became aware that the automobile was whirring merrily toward her. Thorndyke jumped out and began to toss the luggage into the front seat, when he stopped and said in a perfectly indifferent tone, "Perhaps you'd like to sit by me?"

"Well, yes, rather than to be shut up behind," answered Miss Mettleby quite as indifferently; and in profound silence that oddest of journeys was begun. Thorndyke attended strictly to business, and Madge fought the first feeling of being utterly ignored which had ever come into her petted and pampered life.

III

NIGHT had fallen by this, but the full moon, a corn-colored plaque hung against a Remington turquoise sky, was swimming up out of the haze and filling the desert with weird beauty. Gigantic cactus, looking like the ghosts of monsters, scurried past them as the big car hummed and hissed along. Gradually the wilderness mellowed into fertility and at a turn in the white road, on the brow of a little hill, the magnificent valley of Todos Santos stretched out before them. As far as the eye could reach, the immense flat was crossed and criss-crossed by mile-long rows of fruit-trees, orange and lemon and fig and apricot and plum. Here and there lights blinked from the windows of squat, square, cream-gray houses under coronets of tall plumosa palms whose kingly fronds dozed lazily in the soft night breeze. It was almost as light as day, only the light was magically lustrous and uncanny.

"How perfectly enchanting!" cried Madge, breaking at once the silence and her resolution not to be the first to speak. "Do stop a second, please! Do you live here?" she asked after a wondering moment.

"Yes. Why?" He was so brusque, so matter-of-fact, so—so—so wanting in *savoir faire*, don't you know? Yet Madge could not help feeling he was

the sort of man who *does things*. Señor Estobal had said that Thorndyke always showed up at the right moment—and oh, how delicious it was to hear the pure New York accent again!

"I thought you must live here—you seem so indifferent to all this!" Madge swept both her arms out as if to gather up all the beauty. "But tell me: What sort are Señor Estobal and his aunt and his brother and everybody? You know, I suppose, that I've come to be little 'Loupe's governess, and as you're a New Yorker I know that you know just what I want to know about them all."

He leaned forward to look at one of the lamps, which rattled badly, and it took him several minutes to tighten the bolt. He had apparently forgotten her question, if indeed he had heard it at all. Presently they were off again.

"Do you like olives?" he asked suddenly.

"Adore them!" laughed Miss Mettleby, puzzled.

"Then you'll like the Estobal outfit," he replied and seemed disposed to let the conversation drop right there; but Madge had no intention to drop it.

"But why do you say that?" she asked.

"Because," answered Thorndyke in that quiet, even tone of his, "every one of the dozen courses at eleven-o'clock breakfast is soaked in olive oil; every dish at dinner is garnished with olives; and when every other crop on the ranch fails the only hope of the Estobal heart is—olives!"

"Ah, now you're joking—and I'm serious!"

"Well, then, I'll put it differently," went on Thorndyke, still purring softly and not at all entering into Miss Mettleby's merriment, "and will say that Juan Pedro is as sour as an olive, Aunt Natica as dried-up, Poncho as tart, and little 'Loupe—they wanted to baptize her Olivia, but the priest stood out for Nuestra Señora de Guadeloupe—as wholesome as an olive, being half United States, you know. So, you see, if you can go olives you'll have no difficulty in swallowing the

Estobals. You say you adore olives."

"I think you're perfectly horrid! And you know perfectly well that you didn't mean any such thing when you said what you did!"

"Olives are an acquired taste, are they not?" asked Thorndyke after a little thought. "Well, that's what I meant—honestly."

"That sounds more like the truth; but tell me: After one acquires the Estobal taste does one come to like them as much as one does olives? Do you like these people? Trust me—and tell me."

"John Peter is a saint—who tries to run an automobile with the high clutch on and the emergency brake set; how's that?"

"Oh, was that what was the matter?" laughed Madge.

"That and the John Peter way of not doing things," replied Thorndyke, unconsciously falling into the very thought which was shaping itself in her mind.

"I think I understand," she mused. "As a garnish to society, you mean, Señor Estobal is all very well, but olives should be followed by something more substantial. Is that it?"

"How old are you, anyway?" he asked abruptly, but retreated from the over-bold position by adding before she could reply: "One doesn't look for philosophy from a girl of twenty—is it twenty-two or -three?"

"Just between the two," she answered, warming to him as he thawed perceptibly and grew human. "But does it require much philosophy, as you call it, to appreciate the fact that these delightful olives of society are but the—?"

"The *hors-d'œuvres* in life's menu? Yes, it takes common sense to comprehend a properly balanced bill-of-fare."

"Thanks!" laughed Madge, secretly apologizing for having thought him devoid of anything so genial as a compliment. "It's so nice of you to credit me with common sense, you know. You really think I possess it, then?"

"That remains to be seen," he replied,

spoiling it all; and Miss Mettleby sat a little straighter and farther away from him, suffering him to relapse into the churlish silence which seemed to be his idea of how a man should treat a pretty woman as they skimmed along among intoxicating orange-blossoms under a tropic moon. He was clearly hopeless.

"I haven't told you about the others yet, have I?" asked Thorndyke after five depressing minutes.

"I've forgotten," answered Miss Mettleby, thinking to reduce him to a proper state of discomfort, but as a matter of fact affecting him in precisely the opposite way, for some reason.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "are you quite sure that you're not thirty-three, instead of twenty-three?" He chuckled for some seconds before going on to say: "What a forcing-bed society is, is it not? Women ripen so fast in New York! You look an ingénue—and then proceed to prove that you are really that miracle of worldly culture—a woman with common sense and without curiosity! We'll get on famously, don't you think?"

"Change the subject," muttered she, discouragingly enough, but settling back again into her previous corner close to his elbow. Already she foresaw it: this sane (if rather too frank) New Yorker might prove to be an ally well worth cultivating. "You were going to tell me about the others here?"

"Oh, yes. Well, then, brother Poncho—"

"What an absurd name!" she broke in.

"But highly descriptive. His real name is Pablo José Ignacio Maria Francisco—wholly misleading, you see; so it had to be Poncho, just to make things right with the saints."

"Is there no Saint Poncho?"

"Not that I ever heard of. Our Poncho is—"

"An olive?"

"Yes—but a stuffed olive, stuffed with anchovies pickled in tabasco, red-hot peppers, Simla curry, paprika,

deviled onions, Cayenne pepper, white pepper, black pepper and pepper."

"Delicious! Go on."

"Then there's Aunt Natica; Auntie is also one of the *hors-d'œuvres*—rather a radish than an olive, I should say."

"Will it be simply awful—to get on with her, I mean?" asked Madge presently.

"Ever been presented at the Spanish court?"

"Yes—how did you know? When Uncle Homer was ambassador to Madrid Jessie and I were presented; but what has that to do with my getting on with Aunt Natica down here, I'd like to know?"

"Everything. Auntie, too, was presented at court, forty years ago, and she has never got over it—has a relapse, in fact, every night at dinner. Still, I'll back you against the field, when it comes to form. If the conversation drags, try something or other about the shocking bad manners one sees in American society. That'll hold the old girl until she rocks herself to sleep in one of the long row of rocking-chairs that runs down through the middle of the big, empty, whitewashed waiting-room of a parlor."

"And little 'Loupe?"

"Ah, now we're past the olives and down to the chicken. And speaking of chicken, just you wait until you see how many ways chicken can be served!"

They had left the orchards now and were running through a plantation of eucalyptus and pepper-trees, whose feathery branches cut the moonlight into lace of infinite variety and delicacy.

"Anybody else?" inquired Madge when they were done laughing over what Thorndyke—a merciless mimic—went on to tell her of the nightly state dinner.

"No one else—to speak of. There's a poor devil whom you'll meet at dinner—the all-round handy man of the outfit—but as he lives 'way out on the edge of the ranch, in a little adobe hut called The Dreamery, you will not have to consider him. The chap is an

awkward fifth wheel in the starchy ceremony—he dines at the great house every night, you know—and anyhow, he would come under the roast beef and mashed potatoes class; no frills about the overseer."

"American?" asked Madge, musing.

"I said he wasn't an olive, didn't I?"

"Yes—so you're the overseer, are you?"

A gate, a massive affair between great square stone or stucco gate-posts and guarded by a little one-story lodge just inside, stopped them, and Thorndyke jumped out to open it. When he got into the seat again he appeared to have forgotten what they were talking about, and several remarks which Madge made as they drove up a long avenue of magnolias served only to elicit grumpy monosyllables from him. Yes, she said to herself, he was hopeless—and he could have been such a nice man if he had only cared to be!

At the turn in the avenue the low pea-green walls of the mansion came into view, the immense red tiles on the roof lying soft and mellow in the moonlight; at sight of the house Madge suddenly felt the shock of personality, a woman's never-long-absent sense of her appearance. In puzzling over Thorndyke she had almost forgotten that she was being hurried upon a stage quite new to her, where so much—perhaps everything—depended upon first impressions. Also, all that he had said about dinner at "Todos Santos" now heightened her feeling of unpreparedness.

"Gracious!" she cried, unconsciously laying her hand upon his arm, "I'm a perfect sight—and all my things are in those wretched trunks down at the station!"

"Rest easy," he replied, turning the car into the dim archway, barely missing the stone fender set in the corner; "don't you recollect our passing a mule team near the station? They, as well as the two Don Quixotes on horseback, have got here long ago. I brought you the long way around, you know, so that Juan Pedro would

not die of shame for not receiving you in person at his threshold. And here we are!"

IV

STILL murmuring devout thanks for Juan Pedro's thoughtfulness in sending for her trunks, Madge almost got to her feet in her start of delight as the car glided from under the shadow of the archway and into the open courtyard. The *patio* at the *hacienda* of "Todos Santos" is a huge quadrangle, filled with ever-blooming flowers and shaded at the four corners by giant azaleas and oleanders and rubber plants; in the centre a fountain of classical design sends high into the heavy scent-laden air a silvery jet of water, whose falling again makes incessant music, cool and sweet and tinkling. In the moonlight, and under the circumstances of her first beholding this shut-in paradise, Madge felt as though she had been suddenly transported to some land of faery. In such a scene life must certainly be more like a dream than reality; from the bottom of her imaginative and adventurous heart she was glad that she had yielded to Juan Pedro's romantic appeals and come. Yes, and it was awfully nice, she could not help adding, that the overseer was an American and a New Yorker, even if he was an old grouch without manners!

The machine had stolen into the court so noiselessly that their arrival had not been observed, but presently a mighty cackling of women's voices on the opposite side of the square gave the alarm, and no less than three gentlemen in immaculate fresh white suits came bouncing and gesticulating out through the great green doors of the hall. Mr. Estobal himself, protesting vehemently in rapid-fire Spanish and by force of arms preventing the other two, waltzed to the side of the car and assisted Miss Mettleby to alight. Meanwhile Poncho and Señor Dominguez y Aguirra fought over the privilege of lifting out the luggage. On being

presented, Poncho raised the tips of Madge's fingers nearly to his lips and later held his own finger-tips pressed against his breast—it protruded like a pouter-pigeon's under his bulging and profusely pleated shirt-front—as he voiced his sentiments as to her mission of sweet mercy in coming to radiate the charm of her fresh young heart in this abode of two lonely old fellows. Señor Dominguez rendered a running obbligo of compliments the while he danced about the group. Thorndyke devoted his undivided attention to some part of the machinery under the car, and as soon as he put right whatever was wrong he hopped into the seat and the car moved off.

"Oh, I say, Thorndyke," shouted Señor Estobal after him, "it was exceedingly thoughtful, my dear fellow, for you to send the mules after Miss Mettleby's luggage. Dinner in three-quarters of an hour."

Thorndyke paid no attention to his employer's thanks, but Madge watched the machine as it wheeled gracefully around the fountain and until it disappeared through the archway. Once more she was glad that at least the silent and brusque scene-shifter in the fairy romance hailed from God's country. Then she turned and acknowledged Señor Estobal's ceremonious invitation to enter his home. Just within the doors appeared a huge mountain of flounced and embroidered white muslin surmounted by a wrinkled, flabby, profusely powdered old face: Aunt Natica! Madge curtsied low and completely captivated the old lady by the simple sweetness with which the tall girl—one of those American terrors, too!—showed that she knew precisely how to carry herself. Aunt Natica's precautionary air of critical reserve melted away after the first glance at the child's face, and she turned and said to her nephew: "But, Juan, this is an angel who has come to watch over 'Loupe, no?'" Somehow, the old woman's compliment had not in it that something unpleasant and alarming which all the nice things the three men had said seemed to have in them.

But for the fact that they all kept retreating behind the screen of Spanish, Miss Mettleby's first quarter of an hour at "Todos Santos" would have passed off with nothing to be regretted. From their looks she could tell that this resort to an unknown tongue was had only from a desire to be able to lay on the complimentary remarks thicker than even they dared to do to her face, but nevertheless it annoyed her; it was essentially rude, un-Anglo-Saxon, different.

"Ah! here is Carmelita!" exclaimed Aunt Natica as a young, full-blooded Indian girl of eighteen, straight as an arrow and with superb black eyes, stole sheepishly into the hall where they were standing. "Carmelita will be your own servant, my dear. Carmelita, conduct Miss Mettleby to her apartment. We dine in half-an-hour."

Relieved on finding herself at last out of the range of Aunt Natica's drawl and the staccato effusiveness of the gentlemen, Madge followed the Indian girl out into the moonlight and across the courtyard. The Venetian blinds at one of the windows under the arcade on the farther side were drawn up, and Carmelita stood aside, motioning the lady to enter. The room proved to be an immense expanse of white walls, tiled floor, scanty furniture and no visible ceiling. All was sweet and clean, however, and her first feeling of lost loneliness on finding herself in the middle of the vast waste was considerably modified when Carmelita pointed to the little cot beside the high, stiff-looking bed and said, laughing, "Me sleep in zees wan." As she assisted at Miss Mettleby's rather elaborate toilette—Madge picked out her pale rose gown with silver *fleurs de lys*, and Carmelita proved to be a treasure as a tire-woman—the Indian girl expatiated on the grandeur of the Estobals and the perennial warfare waged by the dozen or more women servants against Aunt Natica. Carmelita seemed full of detailed information, which she was anxious to impart. Madge made a note of this fact for future reference, for she could already see that many

signs and wonders would require interpretation. Of "Meester Zorndyke" Carmelita knew nothing, however, except that the two hundred men on the estate swore by him. No, Meester Zorndyke never came to the *hacienda* except for dinner every night; he was won ver' fine man, Meester Zorndyke, saw ver' kind to Indian.

Piloted by her charming little maid, Miss Mettleby recrossed the courtyard, stopping to dip her fingers into the cool water in the basin of the fountain and to pluck a couple of lustrous Kaiserin Auguste Victoria roses, and then walked down the cloister deep in shadow. As they passed one of the window-doors, it opened cautiously and a little figure in a nightgown peeped out. Madge stopped and held out her hands. 'Loupe hesitated an instant and then ran out to scramble up into the outstretched arms.

"I've got lots and lots of lovely things," said 'Loupe as she nestled against Madge's bare neck. "Do you want to see them?"

"Tomorrow, dear," laughed the new governess, and set down the child inside her room. As she went on toward the windows through which streamed the light of many candles Madge added the weazened little All-Eyes to her list of "solid realities," the other items on the list being Thorndyke and Carmelita. Everything else seemed as yet to be unreal, not to say untrue.

They were waiting for her in the grand salon, which Madge found deserved all the fun Thorndyke had made of it; the barest, coldest, stiffest, most bizarre drawing-room that she had ever seen. Genuine "old masters" hung skied on the bald white walls; exquisitely inlaid furniture stood plastered against the four sides; a strip of priceless Persian carpet ran down the centre of the long room, with opposite rows of cheap machine-made rocking-chairs along both sides; and half-a-dozen superb pieces of modern Italian and French sculpture stood ranged on pedestals against a wainscoting of faded Turkey-red adorned with Japanese fans and parasols. Chinese lan-

terns hung from the very high ceiling, together with the quaint and immensely valuable chandeliers of beaten silver and cut crystal.

Surrounded by her courtiers in white, Aunt Natica—now appearing as a vision in black lace over yellow satin—waited for the new guest. Thorndyke, in reassuring black evening dress and white waistcoat and high collar—oh, what a comfort that high collar was in view of the low-neck effect of the Latin-American shirt!—Thorndyke, looking rather bored, but in perfect good form, strolled along the row of statuary, like a London swell "doing" a private view, from a sense of duty. The rustle of Miss Mettleby's gown at the casement was the signal for a four-fold exclamation of admiration. She glanced at Thorndyke, vaguely hoping for a less effusive but far more welcome sign of approval. He was looking at his watch and seemed hungry, if his manner showed any feeling.

The solemn march led through several communicating apartments and then around two sides of the arched quadrangle. On the gallant arm of Juan Pedro, Miss Mettleby preceded Thorndyke and Poncho, who were in turn followed by Aunt Natica leaning heavily upon the inadequate but heroic figure of Señor Dominguez y Aguirra. The dinner was the regulation "French" affair to which she was accustomed, but Madge had never before known what delicious cooking really is, nor how many courses can be strung out into one dinner, nor to what varied and unexpected uses the humble olive may be put. She sat at Señor Estobal's right, with Poncho next to her and Thorndyke opposite. Poncho was a joy; a bald, dapper, sporty little chap whose looks and manner, and especially whose wit, gave color to his boast that he should have been born in Paris, in which joyous capital, he declared, he spent nine months out of every year—"whenever these ancestral olives do their duty by the family and bear plentifully." Juan Pedro performed his part as head of the house and host with the punctilious courtesy of the

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hidalgo that he was and the air of a correct, fashionable undertaker. Thorn-dyke ate his succeeding dishes in placid silence, while the manikin and Aunt Natica discussed Miss Mettleby in Spanish. The manikin's hands and shoulders were so eloquent that Madge got a fairly accurate notion of what he said. In the rather awkward pauses of her talk with Juan Pedro and when Poncho was deep in the mystery of preparing a salad dressing or some other of the half-dozen sauces in whose concoction he was a past master, Madge caught Señor Dominguez's yellow fingers saying: "What teeth she has!" or, "It is the neck of a Venus de Milo done in alabaster, no?" or, "But, my dear friend, her hair is a sunset, a coronet of fine-spun gold, a rhapsody in Titian tints."

After dinner, and while the three Latins were enjoying their huge black cigars, Aunt Natica dozed over her cigarette and coffee in the drawing-room, giving Madge her first opportunity to talk to Thorndyke.

"Well," he asked as they pretended to examine the statues, "how do you like it so far?"

"I can think only of their kindness," she replied, trying to make her tone rebuke his cynicism. "What American or English family would receive a poor governess as these good people have received me?"

"You *do* adore olives, don't you?" His words and air hurt her, but before Madge could call him to account Aunt Natica woke with an apologetic little snort—and the next moment Thorndyke said good night and was gone. Somehow his departure left her feeling strangely ill at ease.

V

SLEEP was not easily wooed on that first night. As she climbed with some difficulty into the high, narrow bed—it looked for all the world like a catafalque!—Madge felt as though she were being laid out in state in some great empty public hall. Taking advantage

of Carmelita's sleepiness, Miss Mettleby had bade her maid go to bed, and then made a tour of investigation of her immense apartment, candle in hand. She discovered that the great folding-doors on either side of the room opened into rooms as large and empty as her own. There was no key in either door; and, to make matters still more uncomfortable, the two windows gave directly upon the courtyard and extended to the floor. Only the flapping Venetian blinds stood between her privacy and the vaguely uncomfortable outer world. Carmelita's presence alone made the situation endurable.

After tossing about uneasily for some time and sitting up now and then to listen to the footsteps which scurried along the courtyard, Madge suddenly heard whispers close to her window and then the thrumming and tinkle of a guitar. Presently Poncho's voice—not a bad tenor—rose in song, none of the quavers and gasps and tremolo of the traditional operatic school being wanting from his style. His repertory included such forgotten gems as "*Ma pari*," from "*Martha*," and "*Donne e mobile*" from "*Rigoletto*." She was being serenaded! The thought filled Miss Mettleby with cold creepiness. Thorndyke had said to her that etiquette among these "Old Californians" was like the laws of the Medes and Persians, and that at every instant there was a proper thing to do—and no end of grossly improper things to be left undone, if one wished to be considered "fit." What was the proper thing to do when a gentleman is standing just outside your Venetian blind, pouring his very soul through his throat and causing his Adam's apple to rise and fall in an ecstasy of romantic melody? Should she applaud? Somehow she felt that applauding in one's nightie—especially when nothing but a peek-a-boo Venetian blind screens one from the public gaze—would be indelicate. But then, on the other hand, if the law of the Medes and Persians called for applause, and she remained silent, poor Poncho would feel unappreciated and she herself be thought underdone.

Carmelita! She was to the manner born; she would understand the situation and be able to advise.

Slipping out of bed and keeping a fearful eye upon the blind, Madge was about to grasp the shoulder of the sleeping maid, when Aunt Natica's strident voice rang out through the court, the Spanish failing to hide the fact that the old lady was issuing peremptory commands for silence and expressing her opinion of the serenade in no complimentary terms. Poncho knew, if Miss Mettleby as yet did not, that Aunt Natica's sole function in life was to see to it that the proprieties were rigorously observed. The music stopped abruptly, there was a sound of rapidly retreating footsteps, and Madge dropped asleep, finally, to dream that Mr. Hardcastle was insisting upon marrying off Aunt Ella to Señor Dominguez y Aguirra.

When she awoke, very early the next morning, Madge found that Carmelita had brought to the bedside a tray bearing a tiny cup of coffee, thick to stickiness and pungent to bitterness, and two hot rolls together with some grape-fruit already sliced and sugared. Although it was barely six o'clock, voices and bustle about the courtyard betokened that the household was astir, and Miss Mettleby found Aunt Natica and little 'Loupe waiting impatiently for her when she stepped through the window. The child sprang eagerly into her arms, having waived, it seemed, all the usual preliminaries of a freshly formed acquaintance, and it was only by the exercise of Aunt Natica's extreme authority that 'Loupe finally consented to wait outside while Miss Mettleby received detailed instructions as to her duties, in a two hours' interview in Aunt Natica's boudoir.

At the end of the interview Madge had less difficulty in shaking off the sense of moving about in some sort of enchantment. Her duties were clearly defined—and humble and monotonous enough in all conscience. She was to rise at six, look after 'Loupe's studies and music until eleven o'clock breakfast, take the child out for a drive

or walk during the early afternoon, read to her between four and six, and be free to rest and dress for dinner only after her charge was asleep, at about seven. Aunt Natica had been suavely gracious, but beneath it all Madge had felt the ribs of the old lady's unbending determination to keep her well in her place, to say nothing of an undefined feeling that the proud old woman was adroitly pointing out the fact that it was only in deference to Juan Pedro's sentimental desire to carry out his dead wife's probable wishes that she, Aunt Natica, had finally consented to employ an American governess. No pains must be spared, she insisted, in forming the little girl's manners upon the good old Spanish model; not that Miss Mettleby's accent and general breeding left any room for anxiety, but it was always well to have a perfect understanding at the start. All joined in the hope that Miss Mettleby would be happy at "Todos Santos," and as for Aunt Natica herself, her one prayer to heaven would henceforth be that poor dear Juan Pedro would never have to accuse himself of having made a mistake in entrusting Guadeloupe to anybody but a Spanish preceptress.

Madge felt her cheeks burn as she sat listening to the old woman's drawling recitation of her duties and the graces and virtues which constitute the proper equipment of a lady. It was insufferable, this guarded but none the less palpable insinuation that she, a daughter of one of the oldest and most distinguished of New York families, a graduate of the best schools in America and Europe and (until that horrid old trust company had to go and fail) as independent as she was socially supreme, had to sit by meekly while this ignorant old woman talked to her as though she were a new parlor-maid or cook! That Aunt Natica was ignorant Madge knew, for she had mentioned certain poets and novelists early in their conversation, and the ridiculous old martinet had stated that she thoroughly disapproved of young women reading anything; she never had read anything,

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she boasted, but her prayer-book and St. Teresa's works, which, she confessed, with a vacuous smile, she couldn't for the life of her understand.

Once or twice Miss Mettleby had to suppress the impulse to tell Aunt Natica just what she thought of her and her stuffy, tight-laced, suffocating conception of woman's life; but each time the reassuring remembrance of Juan Pedro's letters came to her, and she relied upon finding 'Loupe's father looking at things quite differently from 'Loupe's powdered and *passée* old aunt. The crisis was reached, however, when the old lady, at great length and with a frankness which brought brilliant red spots into Madge's cheeks, warned her against permitting Poncho or Mr. Thorndyke, or even Señor Dominguez y Aguirra, to take any liberties with her.

"Liberties!" cried Miss Mettleby, getting to her feet and gripping her hands tight. "Why, what on earth can you mean, Miss Estobal?"

"Young ladies in the States," droned Aunt Natica, lighting a cigarette and rocking her chair languidly, "are given, or they take for themselves, innumerable liberties in their relations with gentlemen."

"What, for example?" Madge fairly shouted.

"Oh, there is no need to go into particulars, my dear—no, nor for you to feel vexed at me for speaking to you as I have, since I do so only because we are all so charmed with you and so grateful to you for coming to us."

The one thing that Madge could never "stand up against" was kindness; so she ran to the side of the old lady and surprised her exceedingly by sitting on the arm of her chair and begging her to forgive her and to tell her exactly what she meant by those "liberties" which these gentlemen might take with her.

"There must be no walking outside the *patio* with either of our gentlemen, no tête-à-têtes with them, except in my presence, no serenades, no *billets-doux*—that's all, my dear."

Madge found it hard to repress a laugh.

"For instance," went on Aunt Natica, "I was most scandalized when I heard that Juan Pedro had gone to fetch you alone in the automobile; and when he returned and told me that Mr. Thorndyke was bringing you—well, you may imagine my feeling of anxiety. In my time such an escapade would have spelled a lost reputation. Not that I anticipate any indiscretion on your part, my dear, of course, but you will see the necessity to avoid setting a bad example to 'Loupe."

Miss Mettleby's cheeks grew hot once more and she relaxed the arm which she had thrown about the old woman's shoulders. With a choking sensation she kept from announcing her intention to leave at once only by her further intention to have a plain talk with Mr. Estobal. Miss Mettleby thanked Miss Estobal for her expressions of interest, and hurried out into the *patio* to find 'Loupe and begin the now ticklish task of forming that innocent upon "the good old Spanish model." The *patio* seemed quite altered; dust was blowing about over the cracked and uneven pavement, the bowl of the fountain looked slimy with green moss, the very flowers drooped, and what had looked a cool, sweet cloister of paradise was plainly nothing but the hot and forbidding courtyard of her—prison! Yes, prison; for she could foresee clearly enough that life here among these impossible people and under the eye of this suspicious old woman—one knows just such old ogres in novels!—must prove to be slavery. Thank heaven! Thorndyke would be at her side and ready to "do things," in the very likely event of anything perfectly awful happening. Little 'Loupe, too, would be such a comfort!

The governess found the child sitting waiting for her on the edge of the fountain, and together they went into the little room littered with dolls and toys, all of them of the expensive imported French sort and most of the mechanical ones hopelessly out of commission. After examining all of the playthings Miss Mettleby, with 'Loupe perched de-

turely on her lap, set to work to ascertain the exact state of the child's advance in learning. Although 'Loupe stated with grave insistence that she was nine and a half, Madge at once discovered that whoever had had charge of her education had adhered strictly to Aunt Natica's general view of feminine culture. The child's mind was a total blank as far as reading, writing, and arithmetic were concerned. She could recite prettily some Spanish verses, and held her funny little yellow hands together when she repeated "Hail Mary" and "Pater Noster." No, she had never heard of Mother Goose; she couldn't understand what Miss Mettleby meant by "Brownies"; and cocked her little head over in wide-eyed wonder when, for the first time, she felt the clutch of sympathy for Cinderella about her heart. At all events, thought Madge, there would be no embarrassing necessity first to remove anything in the way of undesirable knowledge from 'Loupe's mind; if ever a girl of nine lay a plastic mass of innocence under the hand of the potter, Guadeloupe Estobal was that girl. Then, too, the dear little wee mite of a thing was so hungry for intelligent comradeship! And, oh! those great, big, all-imporing eyes of hers!

Breakfast turned out to be less formal than dinner, but one long-drawn agony of Spanish cooking which blistered one's tongue and filled the mind with the idea that as long as the olive oil and garlic held out, there would be no end to the course after course of peppery mystery. Mr. Thorndyke did not come to breakfast. Estobal had spent the morning over the accounts of the estate and was, as a result perhaps, even more depressed and unhappy than usual. Poncho, however, made up for this by keeping up a perfect stream of witty remarks greatly to the discomfort of poor little Señor Dominguez, who had, he took pains to explain to Miss Mettleby, stopped over a few days in order to "ripen ze acquaintance for Mees into wan friendship eternal, yes." Aunt Natica, looking ghastly white with the glaring sun-

light falling upon her freshly powdered face, fulfilled her destiny by smirking gropingly at whatever was said that she did not understand, which was everything with any point to it, and by frowning at Poncho whenever that effervescent gentleman paid Miss Mettleby a compliment, which was every time that he opened his mouth.

Dinner brought Thorndyke, but he quite ignored Madge, although she tried to decoy him into the drawing-room when she and Miss Estobal left the men to their cigars and cognac. He went so far in his churlish disregard as to leave the house without even coming to bid the ladies good night. The afternoon had been a dreary stretch of story-telling and futile efforts to get 'Loupe to comprehend the advantages of mastering the alphabet, and, while there was, of course, the underlying support of a consciousness that even talking to a simpering little ninny all day long is a noble vocation (when it means a hundred a month and one has to do something), still there was no getting away from the fact that even the sweetest little darling in the world must prove cloying as a steady diet. Dinner and Mr. Thorndyke's indifference capped the climax. About a week of this would finish her!

VI

THE week passed, however, and another and another, and Miss Mettleby still remained at "Todos Santos." Moreover, the killing monotony which she had dreaded, lasted only two or three days. After that, "situations" developed with the breathless frequency and *crescendo* intensity of melodrama. By the end of the fortnight Aunt Natica, who had threatened to cumber the foreground and dominate the centre of the stage, had faded into an innocuous and rather welcome detail in the middle distance, while even 'Loupe's education had become a mere incident. The old lady relapsed into her former daily routine, to wit: stay in bed until ten, scold the servants until

eleven, *siesta* from one to four, scold the servants until five, rock until dinner time, dine, and then rock until bed time. 'Loupe's aptitude as a scholar became so marked that it was found that two hours in the morning and one hour in the afternoon sufficed; the rest of the day the child spent out of doors in ecstatic enjoyment of her new-found liberty. But if these two thus withdrew from the action of the play, with little more bearing on the plot than had the Greek chorus, the three gentlemen moved in quick succession into the spot-light and scene after scene ensued, with each soulful cavalier in turn occupying the very forefront.

A heart-to-heart talk with Estobal on the third day of her residence at the *hacienda* had precipitated these radical departures and materially brightened the prospect. Basing her argument upon the ground of 'Loupe's health, the governess had ventured to suggest that she and her sickly little charge be given the freedom of the estate outside the walls of the patio and the surrounding gardens. A pony-cart, or a small auto-runabout, would be awfully nice. Juan Pedro was all smiles; the poor man seemed actually to be happy as he listened to her programme for a simple out-door life for 'Loupe. When, encouraged by this, Madge further ventured to allude to her conversation with Aunt Natica, he grew cautious and reticent again; but for all that it was perfectly clear that at heart he agreed with what the governess had to say about things in general. Without permitting himself the indiscretion—he would also have felt it to be rank disloyalty—of criticizing his venerable aunt's standards, Estobal said that he would have a talk with her and felt certain that he could get her to see at least some things from Miss Mettleby's point of view. At all events, 'Loupe should have a run-about of some sort—and permission to roam over the estates with Miss Mettleby.

"But why have you not told me—all?" asked Juan Pedro, retaining the hand that Madge held out to him

when she rose to go. His tone and the look in his beautiful eyes disturbed her; she always distrusted whatever she could not understand.

"All? What on earth do you mean?" she inquired, withdrawing her hand and bracing herself to repel—what?

"Why, all these things that Mr. Thorndyke has been telling me about you." His peculiar accent and the tenderness with which he spoke increased her uneasiness.

"Mr. Thorndyke!" she gasped. "What can he have been saying about me? I never met him or even heard of him before I came here!"

"Ah, but he knows *all* and has told me!" He motioned to a chair, and Madge, determined to get at the bottom of this inexplicable outburst of personal interest, dropped into it with anything but approval of Thorndyke's gratuitous interference or Estobal's manifest sympathy.

"If you don't mind telling me what Mr. Thorndyke has taken upon himself to tell you, I'll be obliged to you, Señor Estobal," she said, with that squaring of her naturally rather independent shoulders which Jessie always said would leave her without a friend in the world.

Estobal answered slowly and as though selecting each word carefully after rejecting any number of less fitting because less delicate synonyms. "It appears," he began, "that Mr. Thorndyke, a native of New York, has always known the distinguished family of which Miss Mettleby is the noble—I might also say the heroic—daughter, and—"

"Oh, but this is all nonsense, Señor Estobal!"

"Pardon me, Miss Mettleby—and permit me, if you please, to proceed. Had I dreamed, when your letters spoke of yourself as a young lady, fairly well educated and of refined antecedents, but an orphan and entirely dependent upon her own exertions for a livelihood—I say, that if I had once dreamed that Miss Mettleby was really an heiress and for several seasons past the reigning beauty both

at Newport and London and on the Continent, I assure you that I—"

"I can't let you go on in this way, Señor Estobal, I can't, really!" protested Madge, relieving him—and herself—by bursting into a laugh which really was laughter. "Mr. Thorndyke has been drawing upon his imagination."

"If you knew Thorndyke as well as I do," broke in Estobal, "you would not say that. He has no imagination."

"Not really?" murmured Miss Mettleby, meaning, of course, that she thought so herself. "But even if all that Mr. Thorndyke has been saying about me were true, what earthly difference can it make as between you and me, Señor Estobal? Believe me, every word that I wrote you about myself was absolutely true. I must work for my living now, because—because—" Her voice trembled just the least little bit, and Juan Pedro's feelings, which had been rapidly nearing the exploding point, exploded. He rose, and with a low bow extended a nervous, apologetic hand, which Madge took frankly and gratefully.

"What difference, you ask, does all this make?" he stammered. "Consider my embarrassment, Miss Mettleby, my chagrin, my despair, on learning that I had actually discussed—thank heaven, it was by correspondence and not face to face!—that I had discussed the question of salary, duties, mutual obligations, with you, you, *you!* Oh, this is *ter-r-r-rible!*"

It was impossible to laugh at him; a feeling of infinite gratitude surged through her, strangling all other feelings and shaming back all her native sense of humor—even when the impossible little *hidalgo* dropped upon one knee and implored her to forgive him, assuring her that, now that her real character was known, her position would be that of an honored guest so long as she deigned to honor his poor house with her presence.

"But, good gracious!" cried Madge, saving the awful situation by feigning merriment, while really having to brush away a foolish little tear that

trickled out of the corner of one eye, "at that rate, poor Aunt Ella and my sister and I would starve! No, my dear Señor Estobal, if you and Miss Estobal find that 'Loupe makes satisfactory progress under my instruction—and you are otherwise content to let me remain—I must beg you to permit our present arrangement to hold, for I really and truly do need the money just now. Of course, as soon as our affairs in New York are straightened out, if they ever can be straightened out, I may ask you to release me; but in the meantime, I assure you, a hundred dollars a month is—"

"Cease! Pray cease, I beseech you!" implored Juan Pedro, pulling nervously at his wristbands and struggling to conceal his emotion. "Never, Miss Mettleby, never, if you have the slightest regard for my feelings as a gentleman, allude to money again! I have already arranged to have a small sum placed to your credit in your Pasadena bank—only a slight advance upon the figure we had originally agreed upon—and this account will be at the disposal of yourself and your distinguished aunt, Miss Ella Lisperard, and your lovely sister, Miss Jessie Mettleby. For the rest, until you can no longer be content to remain in this lonely abode of a sad and aimless man, you will be doing us all an immense kindness by simply living here as one of the family."

The shoulders gave signs of independence again and when she spoke it was with impressive dignity:

"Only as governess—at one hundred dollars a month—can I think of remaining, Señor Estobal—but I thank you with all my heart!"

Then they talked about other things. In the end, Madge had promised to give herself more time to rest and enjoy herself away from 'Loupe, as well as to come and play the piano for Estobal sometimes in the hour before dinner. That hour, he said, was his one season of relaxation; it would be an act of mercy for her to fill it for him with something other than sorrowful remi-

niscence and gloomy foreboding. Then she ran off to her own room.

Carmelita was waiting for her with a note. It was from Señor Dominguez y Aguirra, bidding her *adios* (in unique English) and assuring her that he would return to "Todos Santos" presently "for cultivate one acquaintance most charming of my life." Dinner would bring Thorndyke—and then for the talk that must be had at once, or it must be the first train tomorrow!

VII

FOR some reason, however, Thorndyke did not come to dinner. His absence, Madge thought, must have been expected by all the others, for no reference was made to it and, although she was strangely upset by it and filled with uneasy curiosity to learn why he failed to show up and how long he would be away, she dared not betray sufficient interest in him to ask. Of the sudden departure of Señor Dominguez, however, each of the Estobals had a good deal to say, and in the consequent talk Miss Mettleby was able to put one thing to another and to arrive at a fairly clear idea of the history, character, and future prospects of that gentleman. He was fabulously rich—on paper; that is to say, he owned square miles of Mexico, which were practically uninhabited and sterile, but believed to be of incalculable value in a mining way; he was "the very soul of honor" (Madge was wicked enough to whisper something to Poncho about the very small body that honor's soul had selected to dwell in); and he was returning to "Todos Santos" in a few days, "to pass the Winter with us."

A whole week went by and still Thorndyke came not, nor did anybody so much as mention his name at dinner. Madge grew anxious as well as curious; if it had not been that Carmelita nightly assured her that Meester Zorndyke was certainly somewhere on the estates, because Manuel Curuno, her lover, had told her so, Miss Mettleby's pride and determination must soon

have succumbed to the risky temptation to inquire for the overseer. Dinner every night, none the less, proved to be quite a cozy little affair, for Aunt Natica now contributed merely her presence and a fresh gown, leaving Madge free to turn from Juan Pedro's always oddly fascinating and meaty talk, to Poncho's equally attractive and deliciously racy and pungent talk; and which way she turned she never failed to find her cavalier ready to forget all about eating and to devote himself to the delightful task of winning her appreciation. Queer brothers, these Estobals, utterly unlike, save in their common possession of a something—Madge gave up trying to say just what this something was—which placed them in a class quite by themselves. No other man whom she had ever met had possessed this subtle, exquisite, irresistible charm, which, while it vanished the instant that she was by herself and could analyze her real feelings, did, nevertheless, hold her tight enough when either of the brothers was talking to her. And such talk it was, too! There was worship in it, there was genuine chivalry, there was—oh, everything that a woman, every woman, should always receive from a man!

Matters in every respect, moreover, began to shape themselves very much to the liking of the governess at "Todos Santos." Telegraphic orders had already brought down a natty little light run-about motor-car, in which Miss Mettleby—always, of course, with 'Loupe for excuse and protection—gradually extended her actual, if not her permissible exploration of the estates and the surrounding country. It evidently did not occur to Aunt Natica that one can cover considerable territory, at twenty-five miles an hour, during a short afternoon. Among other discoveries was the location of "The Dreamery," which so far from being the "mud hut" that Thorndyke had said it was, was really an entrancing little Mexican house, buried in the heart of a wonderful garden and standing, if what she heard was true, not on the Estobal property at all,

but on the edge of Mr. Thorndyke's own two-thousand-acre ranch. What a perfect sphinx that man was! Why hadn't he told her about it—yes, and something about himself? Anyhow, it was nice to know where he lived and that if he ever got married he could really and truly bring his wife to the most exquisitely lovely place in the world.

'Loupe's lessons soon became less trying and by the end of the week education was being imparted and imbibed so smoothly that Miss Mettleby found herself free several hours a day, while 'Loupe was turned loose to range over the home orchard and adjacent fields in the care of one or other of a score of servants with children of their own. Aunt Natica withdrew obligingly into the scarcely visible distance in the general picture of their daily life, her disapproval of the new order of things, if she felt any, finding vent in the regular morning and afternoon scolding in the kitchen. The hour's music or quiet talk with Juan Pedro had become an institution to which Madge actually found herself looking forward after a day or two, and there came also the further institution, a delight from the first, of a daily chat with Poncho, either in the long pergola leading to the vineyard, or, what was ever so much more delightful, whenever the runabout happened to meet him riding his spirited cream-colored Mexican stallion. Then, too, Señor Dominguez had written to say that it might be some time before he could return; so Madge's letters to Aunt Ella and Jessie, from being merely excruciatingly funny descriptions of the comic opera first act, became sincerely happy accounts of a life that was quickly growing upon her. Not to the two eagerly expectant ones far away in Pasadena, but very clearly to herself, Madge began to say all sorts of things and to forecast all sorts of possibilities.

Things drifted along in this way for over a month. Thorndyke had slipped back into his old place at dinner, vouchsafing no explanation (to her at any rate) of his long absence, but before his

reappearance, to which at first she had looked forward with anxious impatience, Madge had almost forgotten just why she could have ever depended upon him for unspoken reassurance or have thought him more "reliable," if that was what she had felt, than either Estobal, whom she now knew to be a singularly sincere and noble man, or even Poncho, who was nothing if not a resourceful and finished man of the world. If Thorndyke noticed any change in her attitude toward himself he gave no indication of annoyance or so much as surprise. In fact, he quite ignored her and ate what was set before him in silence. After dinner he fled to his own house without waiting to enjoy a cigar with the men or a word with the ladies. Whenever Miss Mettleby addressed him he was all graciousness, polite, noncommittal, *blasé*, superbly cool. He, at all events, had not changed.

Señor Dominguez y Aguirra arrived about the first of March—and the dream of an endless succession of days like the last, days filled with leisurely discharged duties amid faintly perceived but vaguely entrancing vistas of an all-possible something that was one day to land her in the depths of romance-land, came to a stop with a shock. The manikin himself said nothing and did nothing to produce this rude awakening. Of course he began at once to pay her ardent court, but his high-flown compliments spilled out of her ears, filled as they were to overflowing with the far more sincere ones of Juan Pedro and the cleverer ones of Poncho. One comes to demand compliments, don't you know, after living with Latins for a few weeks. Miss Mettleby's increasing dislike of Mr. Thorndyke was due to his stolid obtuseness to the ten thousand opportunities which a dinner gives a finely grained man to show a woman what he thinks of her. Better the effusive outpourings of even the manikin than the "good form"—a *frappée* of unnatural reserve amounting to essential boorishness!—of your New York society man. So it was not Señor Dominguez's amazingly frank devotion which precipitated the crisis, but a

letter from Aunt Ella. It came three or four days after the manikin's return to "Todos Santos" and was delivered to Madge, not by Juan Pedro, who sorted the daily mail, but, of all things! by Thorndyke! It was addressed to his care, and he had tried on several days to waylay her as she and 'Loupe drove about; for, of course, he dreaded complications if he had to give it to her at dinner.

Among a number of other things in that astounding epistle, Aunt Ella wrote:

What disturbs me most, my dear Madge, is the fear that you must have encouraged the ridiculous creature in some way. Why have you never even mentioned his name? Jessie insists that it was just because you had begun to care for Señor Dominguez that you carefully avoided writing a word about him; girls never speak of the man they care for, she says. And to think that all my advice on the subject of American girls throwing themselves away on foreign adventurers was wasted! Why didn't you accept that splendid young Austrian count—I have forgotten his name—or even the English baronet, rather than to come away down here to take up with a Mexican? Señor Dominguez writes that he has not, of course, spoken to you, since honor demands that he first obtain the permission of your guardian, myself, but that he has every reason to hope that his addresses will be acceptable to you, whom he loves to distraction; that he will die if he can not win your hand; that, while temporarily embarrassed financially, his property interests are enormous and at any moment a syndicate now looking over his mining lands may pay him untold millions. He implores me to write him at once— Jessie was for telegraphing him to "sail in" and get you if he can!—but I don't know what to do, since you have so unkindly kept us in the dark about what was happening.

Madge dropped the letter. The automobile swerved from the road and fetched up against a tree. Little 'Loupe set up a dismal howl when she beheld her usually serene governess first shriek with laughter and then burst into tears. The child's screams saved the day. While quieting her Madge was able to see the matter in its less repugnant and less tragic light, as in fact the climax of this absurd melodrama into which she had gradually allowed herself to be drawn, thanks to the mawkish influences of the climate, the sub-

tropical unnaturalness of everything, the moonlight, the flowers, the talk of these romantic men—and Thorndyke's cruel desertion of her to her fated Thorndyke! Yes, he was now all that she had left, for of course the manikin had, must have had, the moral support and countenance of Estobal; else how could the wretched little ape have dared to think that she—oh, it was awful, the whole thing was awful! She turned the car and made off at full speed for "The Dreamery." Thorndyke, who had said nothing when he gave her the letter, had not yet reached home, the housekeeper said.

Without at all knowing why she should expect him to feel the slightest interest—goodness knew he had proved his entire indifference in a thousand different ways!—and still less stopping to think of the question of her right to force a confidence of such a nature upon him, Miss Mettleby felt an irresistible desire to see Mr. Thorndyke before having to return to "Todos Santos" and to meet the horrid manikin. She drove out of the gate at one end of the carriage sweep, only to drive in again at the other gate. This manoeuvre she repeated several times, until, fearful lest the housekeeper should become curious, she stopped at the door of the house and pounded the knocker vigorously.

"If you will kindly let me have a pen and some paper," she said to the housekeeper, "I will leave a note for Mr. Thorndyke. You expect him back some time today, of course?"

"Yes, ma'am, I've been looking for him any minute this last hour. Step into Mr. Thorndyke's den, if you please, ma'am. This way."

Madge found herself in a small room furnished in heavy weathered oak and red leather and filled with a prodigious number of things betokening that the hermit whose it was must have moved long and strenuously in the social and sporting and artistic circles in which most of her men friends in New York seemed always to move. In fact, this den might have been any one of a score which she had been privileged to in-

vade at Yale and Harvard and in the cozy, costly little flats to which her cousin, Freddy Van Vorst, had sometimes taken her. At a curiously contrived desk in one corner she scribbled a note begging Mr. Thorndyke, "at any cost and with whatever risk of exciting suspicion or unpleasant surprise," to be sure not to leave after dinner without giving her an opportunity to see him for a moment. As she sealed the envelope she glanced up and was horrified by catching sight of a face pressed close to the diamond panes of a little window at the side of the room. The face was withdrawn instantly, but not before Madge had observed that it was the repulsive little yellow face of Dominguez and that the expression in his piercing little eyes was one of infinite malignity. The rush of possible consequences which for a moment made her feel faint and sick, gave way to the one maddening certainty—her clandestine visit to "The Dreamery" would be promptly reported to the Estobals, and God alone knew what inferences those terrible, jealous, impulsive people would make!

VIII

THE long drive home was a furious one. Poor little 'Loupe clung to her governess in constant expectation of a violent death. There was a sort of desperate relief in whizzing along with the wind blowing past and a great streamer of white dust blowing behind them. Madge, her flushed face set, her hands clutching the steering-wheel viciously and her mind forging one white-hot plan of action after another, to be discarded as soon as formed, breathed fast and found escape from explosion or collapse only through having to strain every nerve and muscle to escape the ever-recurring dangers of the mad exploit. It was almost time to dress for her twilight chat with Estobal, but when Miss Mettleby finally emerged from her own room she went straight to Aunt Natica, still attired in her driving-suit. To this day she does

not know just what she had intended to say to that virtuous old lady, for Aunt Natica received her in a high state of flabby excitement.

"Ah, my dear Mees Mettleby," she exclaimed, "we have been searching for you everywhere; it is much too late for you to be so far from the house, and I must beg that hereafter you refrain from taking 'Loupe outside of the—"

"One moment, if you please, Miss Estobal!" broke in the governess hotly. "I was just about to tell you that I shall be leaving tomorrow."

"Leaving?" gasped Aunt Natica, dropping back into her rocking-chair and using her fan vigorously, as if trying to get more air. "I was afraid that this dreadful telegram and letter meant that something had happened to call you away."

"Telegram?" cried Madge. "Where is it?"

She snatched the message and the letter as Aunt Natica fished them out of her reticule. Telegrams were a common enough matter with her, but somehow this one promised to point a way out; yes, even the news that Aunt Ella had fallen downstairs and broken her ankle would prove a Godsend just now! With a trembling hand Miss Mettleby tore open the brown envelope, the old woman watching the while with the hungry eye of a hawk. In her day young ladies did not receive telegrams; nor letters, for that matter, except under the strict surveillance of their elders. This scandalous telegram evidently contained something improper, for Miss Mettleby turned scarlet as she read it, and then dashed out of the room without a word.

The telegram was from Jessie and ran:

Plot thickens. Your boss has made same proposal as the Mexican. Auntie wild. Do find a long distance 'phone and reveal the dark secret.

JESS.

In the seclusion of her apartment Madge gave herself over to despair—until she suddenly remembered that she had not read the letter, which she

had recognized as Jessie's. It was one of Jess's impromptu jumbles of disconnected fragments of news, nothing worth hearing about, except what was contained in the postscript, written in pencil, on the three sides of the margin on the last page. This news caused Madge to jump off the bed, while a great light seemed to break in through the cracks in the leaden sky of fate which was lowering crushingly down upon her. The letter, written before Mr. Estobal's proposal had arrived, made, of course, no reference to that startling development; but the casual bit of gossip in the postscript came like a special providence, in view of the new turn in the already sufficiently turgid situation. Jessie had written:

Oh, by the way: I nearly forgot to tell you that I have just had a letter from Muriel Burden, in answer to mine telling her about your romantic flight to your paradise. Well, Muriel writes that that awfully nice Jack Thorndyke, whom I met at the Whitney-Ogdens, you know, is living on a ranch called "Todos Santos," somewhere in Southern California. Can it be your place, do you think? I hope so, because he is one of the very nicest men ever—good deal of a dreamer and awfully clever—quarreled with his father, who wanted him to become a banker—goes in for literature and the simple life—that sort of thing, you know. Auntie says she hopes to goodness that he is near you—to shoot those horrid Mexicans if they dare to propose to you!

Carmelita had come in while Madge was reading and re-reading this piece of news; so she could not give vent to her joy. It was very late, Carmelita said, and unless Mees dressed in a hurry Señor Estobal would send somebody to look for her. He had, it seems, been pacing up and down the corridor these twenty minutes, asking everybody where on earth Mees could be. Madge took longer to dress than she had ever done in her life, but even so, when she finally went out into the courtyard she found Juan Pedro still pacing up and down, evidently impatient and nervous. On seeing her come out of her window he ran forward to meet her and begged her to come to his study—there were still ten minutes before dinner—so that he might not be cheated out of his

"musical appetizer," which, he declared, he needed tonight if ever he had. Her first impulse was to advise him that she knew of his letter to her aunt, and that, as her very sincere regard for him could never under any circumstances become any more sentimental feeling, she implored him not to spoil her few remaining days at "Todos Santos" by pressing a suit which must be hopeless, utterly and forever hopeless. But wiser second thoughts prevailed. To speak of such a matter at all must strike him as indelicate in the extreme, to say nothing of needless embarrassment which she would thus bring upon herself. No; Aunt Ella must write him a squelcher—the old lady had it in her!—and if Estobal should forget himself and address her before hearing from Aunt Ella—well, she fancied she could take care of herself.

The wisdom of this decision became clear when Juan Pedro went at once to the piano and opened the volume of Chopin at the piece which he wanted her to play for him. She played it twice, at his request, and yet a third time, and all the while he sat at the other end of the room, listening with his hands held over his face. Always appealingly sad, he seemed infinitely so tonight. A feeling of almost guilt crept over her as she played to him; it was as though she were deliberately encouraging him, for it was her music, more than anything else, which had come to make her so necessary to him. So deep had this feeling become that when, at last, Majin, the butler, clanged the dinner-bell out in the *patio*, she rose from the piano and went over to where Estobal remained sitting with his face in his hands.

"I'm so sorry," she murmured, laying the tips of her fingers on his shoulder to rouse him, "that you are feeling so badly tonight. I hope no unpleasant news has come. Has it?"

Her simplicity and sympathy touched him deeply. He sprang to his feet, blushing and evidently surprised to find that she had stopped playing.

"News?" he said in that patient, uncomplaining way of his. "How long is

it since I gave up hoping that any but unwelcome news could ever come to me? But forgive me; I did not mean to burden you with my sorrows. You played exquisitely tonight. Come!"

He offered her his arm and led her to the drawing-room, where the rest had already assembled. For the first time Madge thoroughly approved of the way in which Thorndyke greeted her, or, rather, the way in which he managed to ignore her, save for a formal bow. Any less self-controlled and finished man of the world, she said to herself, must have betrayed some degree of feeling anent the note she had left in his den, if nothing more than curiosity; but Thorndyke—thank heaven, this time at any rate!—was as serene and unconcerned as though no young woman had stolen clandestinely into his house and implored him in a decidedly melodramatic way to grant her a moment's interview that night without fail (underscored), on a matter of desperate importance (doubly underscored). He was chatting affably with Dominguez, who showed only too plainly that his own narrow bosom was torn with profound emotion of some sort. During the usual ceremonies of Aunt Natica's little court before the grand march in to dinner began, Madge watched the big, calm, imperturbable New Yorker and the fuming, disconcerted little Latin. It was a rare show and a significant, she thought. The more the little fellow writhed under the imperative but, under the circumstances, intolerable necessity laid upon him by every sacred tradition of his race, to endure politely the torture of listening, the more Thorndyke seemed to relish the power to force his untimely humor upon him.

Dinner was unusually dismal. Had it not been for Thorndyke, it would have been funereal. Even Poncho—as a rule the liveliest and wittiest table comrade imaginable—ate in subdued spirits. Perhaps, thought Miss Mettleby, Juan Pedro had told him about the written proposals, and, loyal brother that he was, Poncho felt that mirth would have been out of place pending the issues. Dominguez choked several

times during the repast—with anger at Thorndyke, Madge was certain, for the manikin glared at him each time that he attempted to relieve the depression by saying something clever. Aunt Natica was dumb; not a single crinkle spoiled the smooth surface of her enameled and powdered countenance, so perfectly acquiescent and unmoved did she remain. Juan Pedro, of course, was courteous, but as grave as grief—poor fellow! Only Thorndyke talked. In spite of the surrounding gloom and barely veiled distaste for his levity, he persisted in exploding joke after joke, and belied all her previous judgments of him by engaging Miss Mettleby in frequent exchanges of persiflage. What a superb actor he was! And oh, what a bulwark of security his great square shoulders were! What reassurance there was in his high collar! What splendid courage and self-reliance and pledge of high doing in that clean, true, clear-cut face with its chiseled profile and chin tilted up as if challenging the world! She wondered why she had never realized what a handsome man he was.

Dinner dragged on through the endless courses, but thanks to Thorndyke's occasional excursions into pleasantries, the game and champagne were reached at last. Only *dulce* remained to be dallied over; then after a few inane moments with Aunt Natica in the drawing-room, Madge would see Thorndyke stroll in, dawdle about among the statues and pictures with his coffee-cup in his hand, signal to her that he would be just outside the window—and then for the *coup* which meant escape! Two or three times during dinner, when the enemy were discussing something or other in Spanish, she had managed to catch Thorndyke's usually unresponsive eye, and each time she was sure that he returned the significant look-in her own exceedingly communicative ones. Yes, it was perfectly clear that he had divined the purport of her note and had come fully prepared to advise her just what was to be done. Perhaps he had already formulated a plan for her escape that very night—

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she remembered that there was a train north in the middle of the night—or perhaps he had got Aunt Ella on the long-distance 'phone—she had seen wires leading into "The Dreamery"—and auntie had authorized him to do the squelching of the manikin for her. Yes, that was it! His amazing attentions to Dominguez were all intended to act as a buffer for the blow to be dealt later in the evening! The *dulce* was always some horrid, sickly-sweet concoction; she did wish that they'd hurry up and bring it and get through with it!

Alas! Thorndyke devoured his quail with anything but elegant leisure and then, raising his wine-glass as a salute to Aunt Natica, who smirked a fatigued acknowledgment of his compliment, he pushed back his chair and rose.

"If Miss Estobal will do me the kindness to excuse me," he said, "I shall do myself the unkindness to tear myself away. I have left guests at my own house and must return as soon as possible; I would not have come at all, had I had any way to send my excuses in time. Good night, all."

Madge heard as in a trance. A feeling of faintness alone saved her from exclaiming her protest. It passed instantly and she was able to speak quietly.

"But surely you aren't going to run away," she said, "when our dessert is to be your favorite *sopa boracha*? I heard you complaining only yesterday that Miss Estobal had not given you any of it for a month."

"Dear me!" cried Thorndyke, dropping back into his seat and merry as a boy; "if it's that succulent *sopa* I'll have to stay long enough to have a nibble—and palm off some excuse or other on my guests. Might I have my sweets now, please, Miss Estobal?"

All except Dominguez laughed aloud as Aunt Natica waddled off to the pantry to fetch Thorndyke a heaping portion of the *dulce*. With her own pudgy hands, too, she laid the plate before him and touched a match to the brandy she poured over the sponge-cake, giggling convulsively the while. It was all

very pretty, very natural, and Madge congratulated herself on the complete success of her quick-witted move; it gave her a few minutes at least in which to devise some means of preventing Thorndyke's departure without having a word with him. Then, too, nobody had got the faintest suspicion of her ulterior purpose in suggesting that he should wait for dessert. To make matters still easier, Thorndyke begged like a schoolboy for another helping, and once more Aunt Natica surprised everybody by going herself to bring it. Amid general hilarity Thorndyke gleefully attacked the second mammoth portion, and before he had half eaten it the same delicacy was brought in for all the company—and Madge saw final success within reach. The incident, moreover, had blown away the cloud which had palled the feast, and even Dominguez showed signs of returning spirits.

All was not won, however, for Thorndyke suddenly rose—Aunt Natica did dawdle so over everything!—and Madge realized with consternation that only some heroic, even desperately indiscreet move could now save the situation. Angry and at the same time puzzled by Thorndyke's inexplicable ignoring of her note, and daring whatever might come of her compromising show of interest in his movements, she laid down the fork which rattled against her plate, and plunged into the Rubicon.

"Just a minute, please, Mr. Thorndyke, before you go," she said, trying, not very successfully, to seem off-hand. "I want to see you about something."

Thorndyke bowed gravely; Dominguez dropped his wine-glass; and the Estobals stared at Miss Mettleby as she led Thorndyke out, and then, with blank astonishment, at each other.

IX

THORNDYKE followed and Madge led the way out into the courtyard, stopping only when she reached the fountain. The fountain was the point farthest from all of the windows, behind

whose fluttering blinds she always fancied that somebody was peering or listening. She sat on the edge of the marble basin and Thorndyke, lighting a cigarette, stood over her, for once in his life thoroughly ill at ease and flabbergasted. He hated confidences of all sorts—especially when to receive them placed him in the awkward situation of appearing to bad advantage as an unyielding stickler for good form. Miss Mettleby's unbelievable break was worse than bad form: under all the circumstances, it amounted to perilous folly—but, then, was not this woman a riddle the answer to which he had reluctantly given up? And who knows but he might have yielded to her first subtle appeal to his passion had she been less a riddle to him? Yes, she was—different. Just now she had shown that she was also dangerous.

"Don't you think," he began in that perfectly controlled way of his which always made her feel that he held his feelings under the curb rein; "don't you really think that it was just a bit—well, just a bit impolitic, don't you know, to do this? You know what these people are?"

"No, I don't know what they are!" she retorted, upsetting him, rather, by her vehemence. "That's precisely why I just couldn't let you go without asking you what I am to do."

"To do about what?" he asked, not at all as if he relished the chance of having to advise her.

"What! You got my note, didn't you?"

"Not I. What note?"

She got to her feet. He could see that she was trembling; she was plainly suffering from repressed feelings; and of all "feelings"—all emotions filled him with uneasiness—he dreaded repressed ones most. Presently, however, she relieved the pressure by flying off into a little tempest of (to him) incoherent expressions of regret that she had not left "this madhouse" long ago.

"You sent me a note?" he asked after she quieted down a little.

"I wrote it and left it on your desk—you know, that funny desk in the corner

of your den. Wasn't it there when you got home?"

"I found a note on my desk—rather an interesting desk, that, don't you think? So odd, you know—but the note was from Dominguez."

"From Dominguez?" she cried, clutching his arm in a tragic way most distasteful to him.

"Why, yes. Nothing strange about that, is there? And I do wish you would lower your voice, if you don't mind. He may fancy that you are calling him, you know."

Then she told him. She told him about Señor Dominguez having written to Aunt Ella; about what she had said in the note which she left on the desk in his den; about her having seen the manikin's loathsome little face at the window; and about her determination not to pass another night under the same roof with "these perfectly awful people." Thorndyke listened with constantly growing interest, his nimble and resolute mind developing rapidly a line of drastic action, but at the same time carefully concealing from her both his increasing feeling and his quickly hardening purpose. When she stopped talking he smoked quietly for several seconds before replying.

"It's all a mistake, of course," he said, with tantalizing calmness; "the delightful little simian is laboring under a misapprehension—that's all; a misapprehension, moreover, under which I myself was laboring until late this very afternoon. Nothing serious, you know, just a natural inference. We can put things right without any trouble."

Madge looked up into the calm, strong face that was bending down over her. There was no trace of sentiment in it; even when she had appealed, a maiden in distress if ever there was one, to his chivalry, he had betrayed no feeling but that of a man who, conscious of his strength, stood ready, as a matter of course, to render a casual assistance. Many a callow college chap in flannels had shown infinitely more devotion when retrieving for her a lost golf ball, or tightening Queen Mab's girth for her in the hunting-field. But oh, the sense

of security lying beneath this undemonstrative big man's off-hand assurances! She blessed him with her great hazel eyes as she heard him—and the benediction wrought immediate results, not altogether of a sort to make him as sure of himself as he usually was.

"But of course the horrid little beast must have stolen my note?" she said after he had repeated his assurance that all could be put right.

"Of course," he murmured with aggravating indifference. "What of it?"

"What of it! Why, good gracious! just fancy the use he can make of it—here with Aunt Natica and Señor Estobal, I mean. And then, too, if he should get it into that infamous little head of his that there was anything—I mean, if he should think that you—oh, you know what I mean? All during dinner his wicked little eyes were full of murder whenever he looked at you. Promise me that you'll be on your guard!"

Thorndyke chuckled quietly. He threw back his shoulders, inhaled deeply, and seemed rather to enjoy the prospect of the tragic issue at which she hinted.

"Oh, I know, of course, that he would not dare to meet you face to face," she protested, "but these cowards strike always from behind a real man's back!"

"But didn't I assure you that it was all a mistake?" asked Thorndyke, still laughing silently.

"Just what do you mean by that?"

"If you don't mind, I'd prefer not to say. And please don't forget, I myself shared the cute little chap's misunderstanding, you know."

"Misunderstanding of what? Do be frank!"

"Why, the perfectly natural misconception of the game you were playing here," replied Thorndyke.

"Game? Whatever *can* you mean?"

One of his most disconcerting habits in conversing, and he was full of disconcerting habits of all sorts, was to ignore her last remark, fail to answer her direct questions, and then, when

he had apparently forgotten all about what she was talking about, to make some perfectly irrelevant remark of his own on some totally alien topic. And now this habit once more took possession of him in a cruelly aggravated form.

"Oh, by the way," he asked after puffing meditatively, "I wonder if you happened to see the photograph hanging just over the pipe-rack in my lair?"

"No! I didn't explore; I wrote the note—and left at once." Her tone was somewhat chilly; Thorndyke, however, was not sensitive to cold.

"I thought you might have chanced to see that particular portrait, you know," he said. "On the whole, I'm quite as well pleased that you did not. But let's see: you were saying something about the game you have been playing here, were you not?"

"I was wondering how you could be so cruel—at this time, of all times!"

"Cruel? Forgive me! I meant just the opposite. You see, Miss Mettleby, when a New York society girl whose grandfather left her—was it one million or two?—when a girl, I say, with an immense income and still greater prospects answers an advertisement and buries herself on a California ranch as a governess, why, it just naturally occurs to those who happen to know the facts, that she must be playing some mad game, don't you know?"

"But that's where you are very much mistaken! For goodness only knows how long, I will have no income, for the securities all were swamped in the Amsterdam Trust Company's failure, and I sha'n't have grandfather's fortune until I'm twenty-eight—a perfect age. So I simply had to do something."

"Quite so! That's just the point—but Dominguez does not know all this. I myself didn't know it until five o'clock this afternoon."

"I can't for the life of me see what your knowing it or not knowing it has to do with the question—and how on earth did you learn of my poverty this afternoon at five o'clock?"

"Over the telephone—but that's an-

other story. What I now wish to know—pardon my frankness and trot out all the frankness of your own that you can manage to scrape together!—what I *must* know is: Am I at liberty to let these people understand your true position? Dominguez has already shown that misapprehension concerning a woman's financial affairs is a dangerous thing under certain sentimental conditions; possibly the others here may—"

"Shame!" she broke in bitterly, and he could see, even in the darkness of the courtyard, that he had presumed over much. Her breath came and went in an ominous way, and a certain vague surmise, which had lurked in the background of his thoughts of late, took body and life with fearful suddenness. "You shall not degrade Señor Estobal—no, nor Señor Poncho either—by classing them with this—this—this—"

"By no means," replied Thorndyke, instantly obeying intuition and shaping his course in the light of its unfailing warnings. "Neither Estobal—poor devil!—nor Poncho—lucky dog!—could for one infamous second or under any conceivable circumstances, sink to the level of Dominguez—but, for all that, I think it both unwise and unkind to permit them to keep on making blundering guesses as to why you fled from your natural place in society and came down here as a sort of upper servant. It's not playing the game, Miss Mettleby, on my soul, it's not!"

"You mean, that if they knew that I was exactly what I am—a penniless girl trying to earn a living—they might not show me the consideration that they—"

"Oh, I say," interrupted Thorndyke, matching her own tone of cynical fencing in a way that frightened her, "please remember, Miss Mettleby, that we are having all this talk only because you yourself forced your confidence upon me. Believe me, if you feel that you must protect yourself from all sorts of unkind conclusions and suspicions of mine don't you think it's about time for me to say good night and spare you the necessity to—"

"Don't!" she implored. Something unpleasantly resembling a sob reached his ears—and it was all off with him. The vague idea which had only a moment before taken body and life, rose up a hideous specter before his soul, but now he grappled with it, challenged it, defied it. If it was to triumph over another idea—his own, born in the flash of his heart's sudden awakening—it must first dispute with all the powers of his will and his emotion every inch of the battle-ground. He bent low over her; tears were gleaming in her eyes; her up-turned face pleaded piteously for his championship; and in the depths of him, where ran the still waters of his silent and slow life-current, he pledged it to her, for now and forever, though he said not a word. "Don't!" she almost moaned this time. "I have nobody, I have had nobody to trust and to look to but you!"

Even his tightly curbed self-control might have surprised him into an untimely avowal with no chance for retreat, had not excited voices and a sudden flood of light attracted his attention to the window of the dining-room. From time to time they had heard the three men talking, but there was nothing uncommon in the fact that they all talked at once and in hyperbolic Spanish. Now, however, there could be no mistaking the nature of the vehement words. Mr. Estobal and Poncho were holding each a wriggling arm of Señor Dominguez y Aguirra, who was evidently trying to break away from them. All three were wrought up to a high pitch of nerves, the Mexican especially being in active eruption.

"Where is he?" he shouted in French. "Where is Monsieur Zorndeeck? The honor demands it! I shall not wait, no! I shall get satisfaction now, *moi!*"

"It is most fortunate that Monsieur Dominguez desires to see me now, for I was just on the point of begging him to grant me an interview," replied Thorndyke, also speaking in French. "In fact, it is my intention to compel Monsieur Dominguez to hear what I have to say before he does me the honor

to say anything to me. Shall we retire to the library, monsieur?"

"For God's sake—for my sake—do be careful!" pleaded Madge, unconsciously clinging to Thorndyke's arm as he strode across the pavement.

"Never fear!" laughed Thorndyke, adding in a lower tone, "And now run and get into a traveling-dress. We may decide to leave in half-an-hour."

X

By this, Estobal and Poncho had managed to push Dominguez inside the house and ran forward full of apologies to meet Miss Mettleby. It was all a wretched misunderstanding, Juan Pedro assured her; there was no cause for alarm; one word would presently disabuse Señor Dominguez's mind; and would Miss Mettleby kindly join Aunt Natica in the drawing-room? His distress and the gentle courtesy with which he begged her to forgive and forget the unhappy incident affected her as his words and bearing always did, and waiting only for a nod of approval from Thorndyke, she hurried to the drawing-room to reassure Aunt Natica, whom she knew she would find in a state of nerves. But if Aunt Natica had heard the heated talk in the dining-room and the sudden outbreak of Dominguez out in the cloister she had taken the affair philosophically and done the very best thing under all the circumstances. She was sitting in her rocking-chair fast asleep, her fan on the floor, her double chin resting peacefully on her bosom, and her lips emitting rhythmical little puffs. Madge, in spite of her overwrought state, could not help laughing—it was so like Aunt Natica!—and then tiptoed quickly out into the *patio* and ran over to her room.

In the meantime Thorndyke had continued his determined stride toward the dining-room window, where he was stopped by Poncho.

"As a man of the world, Thorndyke, you will know what *not* to do to another guest of an Estobal while you are

both under our roof?" His tone, while conciliatory, had in it, nevertheless, just enough menace to stiffen Thorndyke's backbone and clear his decks for action.

"As a man of common sense," he retorted, "and an American, I shall protect Miss Mettleby, under your roof or elsewhere, from the infamous designs of this degenerate little ass. Where is he?"

"Oh, but I say, my dear fellow," protested Poncho, forcing a laugh, but plainly indicating that his Latin blood was up, "you must answer to me for any insult or wrong you may offer to a representative of a family, which for a hundred years my family has honored with its friendship."

"As you like, of course," replied Thorndyke; "if you insist upon it, I shall first settle with Dominguez and then with you—with all the Dominguez and Estobal families, for all I care! Where is the fellow?"

"You surely will not forget his weakness, but permit him to meet you on the field of honor with weapons of his selection?" pleaded Poncho, holding Thorndyke's sleeve and barring the way into the room.

"Don't be a damn fool, Estobal!" exclaimed Thorndyke, shaking himself free. "You don't suppose I mean to fight, do you? Not on your life! All that I shall do—and I'll do it, by heaven! before I leave here tonight—is to tell Dominguez exactly what sort of a thing he is—and then he and all the rest of you can do what you jolly well please!"

He pushed past Poncho into the dining-room. Dominguez was standing leaning against the sideboard, pouring brandy into himself as fast as Juan Pedro poured it into his glass. His own hand shook too much to hold the decanter. His whole frame quivered with rage and excitement; his yellow fingers twitched convulsively; his face was livid. Thorndyke had never seen so repulsive an object, and yet he pitied him, especially when Dominguez caught sight of him towering threateningly above him and cowered behind

Poncho, who had purposely stepped in between them.

"Señor Dominguez desired to see me," said Thorndyke, resuming French; "shall we go to the library?"

"Certainly not!" sneered Dominguez, waxing valiant again under cover of Poncho's ample form, now set firm and defiant before him. "I refuse to receive the confidential communications of Monsieur Zorndeeck! If monsieur has anything to say to me I demand that these gentlemen be witnesses of whatever may transpire. As for me, I shall express myself only in the presence of my good friends, *moi!*"

"Bravo!" laughed Thorndyke, convulsed by the little man's adroitness in avoiding an interview except within range of Poncho's protecting fire. "Monsieur voices my sentiments exactly. Monsieur insists upon witnesses. So do I. I desire these gentlemen to bear witness, for one thing, to the fact that it was my original intention to speak to Monsieur Dominguez privately. He demands witnesses; so I have no choice but to inform all three of you of certain facts of which I would have preferred to inform monsieur alone. And now, as it's getting late—I really don't know how I am ever to explain my long absence to my guests at 'The Dreamery'—suppose we begin? By the way, Estobal, if you don't mind, we'll open another quart of that superb old Madeira of yours, and have our friendly little chat over our wine, eh?"

Juan Pedro had been walking to and fro, a picture of bewildered distress, and he seized with relief the diversion suggested by Thorndyke. While the wine was being fetched, Dominguez and Poncho had a parley in whispers, Thorndyke taking advantage of the interlude to make an examination in detail of the family portraits, dwelling with particular admiration upon that of an ancient female Estobal who had died a nun.

With all his efforts to delay matters, Juan Pedro had at last to invite his two guests to be seated at his board, he and

Poncho being careful to have the whole length of the table between the high conflicting parties. The glasses were filled in depressing silence, the bottle was placed at Estobal's side, and the butler withdrew. Thorndyke sipped his wine and stated several times that it was the best Madeira he had ever tasted. Nobody expressed a contrary opinion or remark of any sort—and the game was on.

"Before getting down to the subject proper," began Thorndyke, offering his cigar-case to Poncho and then to Dominguez, who declined it with a "Pish!" "I desire to ask Dominguez for the letter he stole from my house this afternoon—simply to let me read it, you know."

"On my word, Thorndyke," cried Juan Pedro, starting to his feet with a look of pain and surprise, "I cannot permit you to make such an accusation against a gentleman who is the soul of honor and my guest!"

"Our ideas of honor may be quite different," replied Thorndyke, leaning over to persuade Poncho to keep his seat; "but I shall insist upon stating the facts. This afternoon Miss Mettleby—"

"It is customary among gentlemen," broke in Poncho, very red and hot, "to avoid dragging the name of a lady into their disputes. The lady you insult by mentioning by name happens to be under our roof and—"

"And under my protection!" added Thorndyke, leaning back in his chair and smoking calmly while waiting for the triple outburst of Spanish to subside. When it had done so he went on: "Miss Mettleby did me the honor to visit my house today, and while there, since I was not at home, she wrote me a note, which she left on my desk. Dominguez, who had evidently followed the lady, spied upon her actions and after her departure went in and stole the letter. Do you happen to have it with you now, Dominguez?"

His manner was so perfectly easy that Dominguez for a moment appeared not to comprehend; for a moment only, however, for in the next he sprang to

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his feet and shook his clenched hand in Thorndyke's placid face.

"As the suitor for the lady's hand," hissed the furious little señor, "I was bound in honor to protect her from her own indiscretion, no less than from the compromising snares set by this man. I am proud to say that I did follow the lady to the house of monsieur; that I did extend my care for her honor by watching what passed within; that I did take the letter, lest this man should use it to her disadvantage; and—there it is!"

"My God, Dominguez!" groaned Juan Pedro as Dominguez took the stolen letter from his pocket and flung it across the table to Thorndyke. "As a man of honor, how could you have done this?"

"Our notions of honor, Estobal, may not be so different, after all—nor our estimate of the character of my distinguished fellow-guest," remarked Thorndyke, while Juan Pedro rose and paced about the room in pitiful chagrin, and Poncho eyed Dominguez in what Thorndyke thought was a way that boded the Mexican no good.

"Hear me!" pleaded Dominguez, rising and confronting Estobal. "As the avowed suitor for the hand of this lady—a suit which the lady herself has only too openly encouraged—would I have deserved the name of a man of honor and a Dominguez had I stood idly by while this man cunningly wove his fiendish—"

"Good Lord, man!" shouted Thorndyke, rising again to push Poncho, who looked increasingly ugly, back into his seat, "haven't you read the letter which I brought this evening and gave to your man to give to you? It is a letter from Miss Lisenard, the aunt and immediate guardian of Miss Mettleby, and it contains a brief but emphatic dismissal of monsieur's ridiculous suit—but see here, old man," went on Thorndyke, grasping the manikin's arm as he reeled under the shock, "you really must try to bear this disappointment like a man. I yield to no one in my appreciation of Miss Mettleby, but a penniless girl

might very naturally find herself unhappy amid the luxurious surroundings of your *hacienda*. I myself know of no end of marriages that have turned out wretchedly, owing to the immense inequality in the fortune of the husband and wife, I do really."

"Penniless girl, you say?" cried Dominguez, his gimlet eyes boring for what he felt sure was Thorndyke's secret purpose in deceiving him. "Why, man, this lady is an heiress—millions—in her own right!"

Juan Pedro shot a despairing look at Dominguez, and Thorndyke and Poncho exchanged looks not at all despairing, but rather full of knowing. Thorndyke signaled for the right to finish the operation of reducing Dominguez to his naked first principles.

"Not at all," replied Thorndyke; "whatever income Miss Mettleby may have enjoyed formerly, her sole revenue today is derived from her efforts as a governess in this house."

"You are not deceiving me? You would not do so in so vital a matter?" asked Dominguez, all his previous wrath gone and speaking almost with affection.

"Mr. Thorndyke tells you only what is true," murmured Juan Pedro, trying, not over successfully, to save his reputation as a host by hiding his feeling of amazed contempt. "The young lady's fortune was, alas! lost in the recent financial storm—and it is the courage and faith with which she has set about earning her livelihood that have enthroned her in my most exalted regard."

He spoke with emotion too deep to be hidden, and Thorndyke grappled no longer with the ghost of a vague surmise, but with a situation, delicate, distasteful, desperate. Poncho also seemed unaccountably moved by his brother's show of sentiment, for he studied his face searchingly while Juan Pedro went on dilating upon Miss Mettleby's pathetic situation, and presently left the room in a casual sort of way, leaving the others to finish the wine as a libation to Peace. In the ensuing talk Dominguez gradually re-

turned to his former state of cordiality toward Thorndyke, who reciprocated in kind after the manikin had proffered a profound and high-flown apology—for having accidentally turned eavesdropper, liar and thief! thought Thorndyke as he accepted the outstretched yellow hand. Poncho returned in about half-an-hour and Thorndyke at once perceived that he was terribly upset and stirred up about something, for he gulped down a tumbler of cognac and then whispered excitedly to his brother. Juan Pedro started, made Poncho repeat what he had said, and the two rose and left the room with eyes flashing, a tumbling barometer and alarming other signs of impending weather. Not in the least desirous of enjoying a *tête-à-tête* with Dominguez, Thorndyke bade the now effusively polite gentleman good night, and strolled out into the corridor to seek news of Miss Mettleby. He got it. As he turned into the passage leading out upon the *patio* he came face to face with Madge herself in high debate with Juan Pedro and Aunt Natica, Poncho having vanished.

"What madness is this, Thorndyke?" exclaimed Señor Estobal as Thorndyke reached them. "Miss Mettleby declares that she is about to leave this house—at such an hour!—at your suggestion, sir, and in your company!"

"Oh, yes," replied Thorndyke pleasantly, "I did suggest something of the kind, I remember—but that was before Dominguez had recovered, you know. As matters stand now I don't see why Miss Mettleby should not remain here. It's a stiffish ride to 'The Dreamery' after dinner—unless, Estobal, you should let us take the runabout?"

"Is he quite mad?" asked Aunt Natica, choking with scandalized surprise. "Convince him, Juan Pedro, that his proposition is simply impossible, fatal, and—and—and—well, I might as well say it, since you say nothing—and positively immoral!"

"I'm going—no matter what anybody says or thinks!" announced Madge, calling Thorndyke's attention

to her suit-case standing in the corner of the passage. After the harrowing interview which she had just had with poor Poncho—she had never dreamed what a truly fine fellow Poncho was—the very thought of another night in this house was enough to drive her mad. The dear, foolish, emotional, lovable, impossible fellow had told her that he had only that moment learned that she was without fortune, and he had found it utterly impossible to deny his passion the cry for recognition which it had yearned to make ever since the night when he first met her. The poor dear fellow had sworn that he would end all before morning if she gave him no hope. She had, of course, given him no hope—so it was leave the house or endure heaven alone knew what tortures. Thorndyke had never failed her; he would find a way to provide for her comfort and safety until the next train for the blessed old security and peace under Aunt Ella's wing.

"But, Thorndyke," cried Estobal, wringing his hands in a paroxysm of amazement and disgust, "if Miss Mettleby's emotions have led her to think of this desperate step, you, as a man of experience and a gentleman, must see that you do her an infinite wrong by countenancing her doubtless excusable and natural but none the less fatal purpose?"

"Come here, Estobal," replied Thorndyke quietly, leading Juan Pedro aside and whispering something to him which made him start. "I hope that satisfies you?" asked Thorndyke as the two returned to where the ladies stood.

"Miss Mettleby," said Estobal, speaking very low and in his customary formal way, "if this is farewell as well as good night, I wish you both. Aunt Natica, Miss Mettleby goes to the house of Mr. Thorndyke with my entire approval. I shall order the runabout."

He went out into the courtyard, leaving Aunt Natica dumb with wonder not unmixed with curiosity; and Madge equally speechless with gratitude not wholly free from a deeper and holier feeling. Thorndyke waited for

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the runabout in about the same attitude of body and mind that he had been wont to await his carriage after the Opera or a dinner party. Great is that eighth cardinal virtue—the ability to keep a high collar from wilting, no matter what happens.

XI

IN the flurry and excitement of the half-hour preceding their flight from "Todos Santos" Madge had not had time to anticipate the possible embarrassment and probable awkwardness of any such adventure. But as she took her seat beside him and Thorndyke stooped to make snug the lap-robe about her feet, she began to realize that a sudden departure late at night and bound she didn't know just where, with the man who had somehow come to look upon her as his special charge, might very possibly prove embarrassing and almost certainly awkward. Still, she comforted herself by remembering Thorndyke had a way of "putting things right," as he styled it, and no doubt he could put even this unthinkable unpleasant situation right after his own easy and pleasing fashion. She would, however, like awfully to know where he was going to take her, for of course his own house was out of the question, notwithstanding that poor Juan Pedro, who seemed never able either to put things right nor to get things straight, had indicated that impossible plan—poor innocent! Yes, she would like awfully well to know, but she would hate awfully to ask.

On reaching the broad, smooth, white turnpike Thorndyke, who hadn't opened his mouth since they started, gave his close attention to the task of keeping the machine going at forty miles an hour and on the road, as well as to avoiding saying anything ill-advised, by saying nothing at all. Such a man! She was aching to talk over every step in the evening's breathtaking developments, and he remained as silent as though he had not so much as heard that anything unusual had oc-

curred. At the bumpy place this side of the long up-grade, however, he would have to slow down, and then he would surely say something. And he did.

"Still as fond of olives as you used to be?" he asked, his tone, as usual, intimating that he didn't care very much what the answer might be.

"I'm not in the mood to jest," she replied.

"Jerusalem! neither am I! Jest? I feel as though I would never be able to see the point of a joke again—but, in all seriousness, you'll be glad to learn that when I left Señor Dominguez y Aguirra he looked upon me as a friend and a brother; also, that I have the note you wrote me in my pocket. It had mysteriously found its way into Dominguez's pocket, you know."

"The beast! Had he read it?"

"No; the seal was intact. Dominguez reads English with even more difficulty than he speaks it; not, of course, that he would have stooped to violate the correspondence of a poor working-girl in the employ of his host."

"Oh, did you tell him that I had lost my money?"

"Yes. I broke the terrible news to the poor fellow as gently as I could—and he will never get over it. I mean he will never get over thanking me for saving him, just in the nick of time, from getting your aunt's permission to get your consent—how's that?"

"The horrid, infamous, awful little beast! But I haven't told you: Poncho heard your news with quite other ears. He spoke to me tonight."

Thorndyke hoped that she did not notice that he started. This new turn caught him off his guard; he had, of course, observed the steadily growing friendship between them, but Poncho had never once entered his mind in this connection; and for one sickening second he wondered if he had been bracing himself to meet the wrong possibility.

"There's a heavier robe under the seat, if you're chilly," he said after a little.

"You don't seem to be interested," she replied.

"Not especially," he answered, add-

ing quickly, after revolving several things through his mind, "unless you are interested. Are you?"

His abruptness always found her unprepared; it was just because one never knew what he would say—the chances being always that he would say nothing—that one was always caught unprepared.

"I refused him—if that's what you mean," she said finally.

"Why? Not that it's any of my business, or that it matters, but since you happened to refer to the subject—"

"Aren't you a bit cruel, to ask me such a question? I refused him because—one can't make a meal out of the *hors-d'œuvres*!"

This time Thorndyke did not care whether or not she had noticed the start with which he had heard her tell the whole story in one word, a word he himself had taught her together with its esoteric significance.

"They're a queer lot, these olives and radishes and anchovies and celery stalks and frilly appetizers of society, are they not?" He grew frivolous as the pleasure her last words had given him trickled down through his mind.

"They certainly are," she answered, "but all the same I just wish with all my heart that I hadn't been compelled to make quite such a sweeping avowal of my preference for—for—for—how shall I put it?"

"For corned beef and cabbage."

"But will I ever, ever, ever be able to look an olive in the face again?"

"Never fear! I'll see the whole outfit tomorrow; they're not a bad lot—for olives; and I'll wager my head that it won't be any trick at all to put things right."

She heard the old phrase with a new delight; it was the simple programme of the man "who does things", and what had not this man done for her? They were past the bumpy place and over the hill by this time, and as Thorndyke once more devoted himself to keeping the car from running into eternity, she fell to making her first serious attempt to measure her true feeling for him.

Had he dreamed what was doing in her heart at the moment, his own would not have been filled with anxious questioning. The result of her self-analysis was, that if she ever did love anyone, he would be, like Thorndyke, masterful, simple, solid and never, never an olive nor a mere appetizer (however appetizing!) before the serious business of life. No! With a vividness never before attained, she now realized that the hunger of her soul could never be satisfied save by the all-conquering love of—a man like Thorndyke! It was not of all this, however, that she spoke when at last they were nearing the cross-roads where she might be able to guess her destination. To the left would mean that he was taking her to the railway; to the right, to "The Dreamery"—which, of course, was out of the question; but if not to "The Dreamery" nor yet to the train, where?

He turned to the right!

Madge sat up. It was all right, of course! Her knight of the power to put things right knew exactly what he was about—but, just the same, it might strike Aunt Ella, to say nothing of the world at large, as a bit indiscreet, don't you know, that a bachelor living alone should—

"You seem nervous about something," said Thorndyke suddenly, with that disquieting knock he had of discovering what she was thinking about. "It's all serene, you know. To tell the truth, I rather expected that you might make up your mind to leave rather suddenly; so I arranged. You are expected at my house. Don't jump so! Didn't you hear Saint Juan Pedro assure Aunt Natica that you were to be my guest with his entire approval? *That* ought to be sufficient for you who seem to swear by him!"

Relieved as she certainly was, she didn't like his tone when he spoke of Mr. Estobal. Was he jealous? It sounded like it! Also, it pleased her, oddly.

"I was only thinking," she replied, with an object beyond the mere natural wish to punish him, "that Mr. Estobal would have gone about such a rescue

as this in such a different way, you know."

"Yes," muttered Thorndyke, stung but very far from disarmed, "I'm no match for these elegant *hidalgoes* when it comes to romancing. But, then, what can you expect from a poor overseer?"

"I'm not the only one who has been playing a game, it seems," she laughed. "Overseer! I like that! Isn't it about time for you to explain—as you made me do? Do you know, if you would only say something now and then—give one a peep into your real self, you know—not only 'put things right,' but tell one the secret of your—your—your skill, you know—instead of tossing off your miracles with an air of 'Just watch me and see how easy it is to do things when you know how'—why, then, Mr. Thorndyke, who knows but I might have come to think you awfully nice—yes, and I wouldn't feel as uncomfortable, you know, as I do this minute!"

He laughed. All this was as music in his ears. But what he desired above all things just then was to get at her true feelings toward Estobal.

"Yes," he answered, "I'd give anything to have a glass over my heart as Juan Pedro has; it enables one to reveal his most sacred and profound emotions while you wait! Chumps like me have to take it out in just doing the best we can, leaving you to guess—not always the right guess either!—at our motives. It's a pity, too, is it not, that those fellows with open-faced hearts always seem to be a little shy on connecting with practical results?"

He voiced her own sentiments to a dot, but this was no time to let him know this; so she gave him something to think about by saying very soulfully: "Life is not all practical results; a woman treasures most those emotions and sentiments that never, as you practical men put it, 'come to anything.' They come, at any rate, to mean everything to a woman."

They whirled past a gate as she spoke; in another minute they stopped at his door. He was dumb as he helped her out. Like a blithering idiot, he

now accused himself, he had let that sentimental dyspeptic intoxicate her with his hot-house perfumes, while he, banking on her Anglo-Saxon forthrightness and on what he knew of her character and her past, had played the game in the open and based his hopes on tangible points. He opened the door and stood aside to let her enter.

"Could the housekeeper come to me at once?" she asked nervously as she stepped into the hall.

"She goes to bed at seven," he replied curtly. "I'll call her when you want to go to bed. But my chafing-dish and fixings are always in the den, and I think I know something about certain mixtures that would make even Poncho sit up and take notice."

"If you don't mind," she protested, still standing near the door, "I'll ask you to call her now. I'm dead tired and—"

She stopped. A door at the farther end of the passage opened; somebody's head appeared cautiously peering into the semi-gloom; and then it disappeared and Madge heard a great noise of laughing and talking. She glanced dubiously at Thorndyke; he was hanging his Inverness on the rack and so had his back to her. Before she could ask him what the noise meant, the far door opened again and Jessie burst into the hall, followed by Aunt Ella. Madge collapsed into an arm-chair and sent one long, lingering, all-surrendering look at the Man Who Put Things Right.

XII

"But he *does*!" protested Jess, getting up on an elbow, the better to argue the point. "He does! Else why did he beg Clive Penrose to give him that impressionist photograph that he took of you—you know, the one everybody on the yacht went wild over?"

They had been talking all night—that is to say, ever since the little party in Thorndyke's den broke up, which was not until after one o'clock, for Aunt Ella had a good deal to say, and all had several things they wanted to know

about—but tired as she was, and although dawn was showing a lurid square at the casements, Madge also got up on her elbow.

"Do you mean to tell me that Mr. Thorndyke has that picture of me?"

"He certainly has!" replied Jess triumphantly. "It's hanging over his pipe-rack in the den—what a perfect darling of a den it is, too, isn't it?"

"What if he has the picture?" sneered Madge. "It is only an idealized study; Clive Penrose called it 'Dreams,' you know."

"Yes, I know—and Jack Thorndyke has been dreaming about you ever since he first saw the picture. And you just ought to have heard him talking about you to Aunt Ella—something s-w-e-e-t!"

"Be quiet, stupid! What do you really know about him, anyway?"

"I know," retorted Jess, volleying close to the net and very swift and sure, "I know that Jack Thorndyke is Monty Pell's chum, and that Gladys and that stuck-up Honorable Evelyn Paget and both the Endicott girls and Hildegard Bleecker all tried their deadliest to get him, and he'll be worth all kinds of money—"

"For heaven's sake don't get slangy, Jess!"

"And that he borrowed forty thousand dollars from Monty Pell so as to buy this perfect paradise of a place—isn't it divine, honestly?—and so as to let his father—old Mr. Thorndyke is awfully stingy, Muriel says—so as to let his father see that he can make his own fortune, and—"

"Why on earth, then, did he hire himself out to Señor Estobal?" asked Madge.

"Why, because, silly, he needed the ten thousand a year which the Estobals pay him for being brains and common sense for them. Mr. Delphine Olivieda—you haven't met him, have you, though? An awfully nice fellow—met him in Los Angeles, you know, at the Michelenas—he says that the Estobals were on the very verge of ruin when Jack Thorndyke came here and installed the greatest irrigating works in all Cali-

fornia, besides straightening out the worst muddle of accounts and mismanagement generally that Delphine Olivieda says you ever saw! That's who and what Jack Thorndyke is—and if he's not dead gone on you—well, then there's nothing certain this side of Woodlawn Cemetery!"

"Except that I've heard enough of your nonsense for one night, and now I'm going to sleep!"

When Madge woke, at about noon the next day, she found that Jess had already been up a couple of hours, and from her, whom she found practising Spanish with two Indian girls in the *patio*, she learned that Aunt Ella was closeted with Señor Estobal in the drawing-room. Thorndyke, it appeared, had gone as usual to make his morning rounds over the two estates; he had left before Estobal's arrival; and no, Jess hadn't the faintest idea of what was being discussed in the drawing-room. Madge smiled. She had given Jess a detailed report of Poncho's proposal, but had purposely refrained from telling her that Juan Pedro had not, as yet, spoken. The poor dear fellow had, of course, hurried over to "The Dreamery" to plead in person with Aunt Ella for permission to speak to her. It was time for luncheon when, at last, Aunt Ella and Señor Estobal came out into the garden to meet them.

"I have obtained the kind permission of Miss Lispernard," began Juan Pedro, when, thanks to some rather transparent manœuvring by Aunt Ella, Jess had been towed by her out of the firing zone, "the permission, Miss Mettleby, to speak to you on a matter which has been in my heart for some time. Have I your own permission?"

"Must the friendship which I feel for you, Mr. Estobal, and which is, I assure you, a very real and holy feeling on my part, be spoiled? Please don't speak to me. Nothing could possibly come of it but pain for both of us. I shall always think of—"

She caught sight of Aunt Ella making frantic signals to her from behind

the hedge of dwarf cypress; it was clear that she wanted to communicate some vitally important matter before the interview reached its inevitable climax. So Madge made some excuse, promised to rejoin him presently, and fled, by a circuitous route, to the ambush behind the hedge.

"What on earth is it now, auntie?" she asked as she came up to Aunt Ella, who had dropped, breathless and flustered generally, upon a garden bench.

"Why, my dear," replied Aunt Ella between gasps, "Jessie has just discovered that this is Mr. Juan Pedro!"

"Of course! What of it? Are you crazy?"

"But good gracious!" retorted Aunt Ella, "it wasn't Juan Pedro who wrote me that letter; it was the other brother, you know!"

"Well, what of that? I refused Poncho last night. I was just going to refuse Juan Pedro when I saw you waving to me."

"Yes, but he hasn't said a word about proposing to you!" groaned Aunt Ella. "He merely said that he wanted to speak to you about something very near his heart, which he would not presume to do without first getting my consent. I naturally supposed that he wanted to carry out what he had said in his letter—and now, he never wrote me a letter, and the Lord only knows what it is he wants to talk to you about!"

Madge sank beside her on the bench, too dazed to speak for a moment.

"Don't, for heaven's sake, tell me that you said anything that he could possibly have taken as a hint!" she moaned, remembering how perilously near she herself had come to doing precisely that thing.

"No!" answered Aunt Ella weakly; "all that I remember to have said was that I feared he would find it useless to speak to you!"

"Goodness!" groaned Madge. "But I think I can fix things even yet. I'll try. And *do* keep Mr. Thorndyke away from us until I have time to try!"

When she returned to Estobal, however, it was to find him walking de-

jected and with his whole air and bearing capable of only one interpretation. Still, Madge felt that it might be safer to pretend innocence.

"There was something you wished to speak to me about, Señor Estobal?" she began, lending her tone but the merest touch of feeling—just so as not to make him think her unfeeling.

"Yes," answered Juan Pedro, brightening noticeably as he looked into her big frank eyes. "For some time, Miss Mettleby, I have foreseen that your stay under my roof could not continue long—no happiness ever remains with me!—but I did not anticipate the deplorable events of last night, nor that your going would be attended by circumstances likely to separate us forever."

"Please don't say that!" murmured Madge, "for we can always be friends, and I shall always remember your goodness to me in every way."

Juan Pedro bowed low before going on. "Though you have been away from my home only a few hours, I can already see what your departure will mean to us all, especially to myself and my poor little 'Loupe, who has been inconsolable ever since she was told you had gone. Therefore, Miss Mettleby, with the profoundest sense of the measureless boon which I am about to ask, as well as of my utter unworthiness to beg anything at your hands, I have come here this morning—pardon my unfeeling haste, for my broken heart overcame my calmer reason—I have come to implore you to—" He seized her hand and raised it reverently to his lips and held it until she withdrew it with a little murmur of protest.

"I would do anything, dear Señor Estobal, to show my gratitude to you, but really and truly I—"

"Do not refuse me," he interrupted passionately, "until I have at least placed my whole case before you in detail. One argument which I have never so much as hinted at, must have some weight with you."

"I fear—no, I *know*, that I cannot—"

"Miss Mettleby," pleaded Juan

Pedro, abandoning all his customary reserve and flinging himself into his plea, "for God's sake, grant me my request: take my poor, motherless little 'Loupe with you—to New York, to Europe, wherever you may go—and keep her for me, keep her from guessing the truth about her mother and from knowing the sorrows of her father's life, until you have made her able to bear it all bravely and to bring sunlight back into my home, by teaching her to become like you, God bless you!"

Madge steadied herself by laying her hand on his arm. The poor, dear, child-hearted man had come—she realized it now with burning cheeks, yes, and a great and holy joy of thankfulness that it was so—he had come, not to ask her to be his wife, but to beg her not to forsake his little 'Loupe; and he had asked her with tenderness which almost broke her heart. When she could manage to do so she promised to see what arrangement could be made and then walked with him to the gate, for he would not stop for luncheon. Madge watched him ride away and waved her hand to him when, at the turn in the road, he reined in his horse, wheeled about, rose in his stirrups, and ended the little ceremony with a flourish of his sombrero. Then he put spurs to his only too willing Mexican, and Madge walked back, full of strange thoughts, to the house.

"Oh, we can put that right, all right enough," laughed Thorndyke, two weeks afterward, when they were all having that memorable talk in Aunt Ella's own room after Jack had had that other still more memorable talk with Madge, "for you see, Poncho is in Paris by this time—good for the balance of his life! 'Dominguez has been told never to show his face north of the Mexican border; Aunt Natica has carried out her threat (I would have looked on it as a glorious promise!) and has retired to a convent in Guadalajara; and poor Juan Pedro, therefore, means just what he says, when he tells us that if you all would care to live at 'Todos Santos' for a year or so, it would be a kindness to him. He is going to take his wife out of the asylum and see if travel may not hasten her recovery. So I say—let's."

"And you'll come over to dinner every night?" asked Madge.

"Why, certainly!" replied Thorndyke; "in the absence of—"

"The *hors-d'œuvres*, we couldn't get along without—without—solid comfort of some sort!"

"Translate, please," demanded Jess.

"You're too young to understand," laughed Madge, and Thorndyke added: "At your age, little Jessie, most young misses *just adore* olives; later, they—"

"If getting engaged makes everybody as crazy as you two," sniffed Jess, "I'll never marry!"



NOTHING DOING

WOMAN—Now that I have fed you, are you going without doing your work?
TRAMP—Oi couldn't wurruk on an impty stumach, mum; an Oi *nivir* wurruk on er full one. So there yez be!



HER POINTED VIEW

CHAPPIE (*blasé*)—Don't you think society is an empty thing?
MISS FULLER—I think there are lots of empty things in society.

IT WAS SOLD—THAT'S ALL

By Anne Warner

THERE was a wondrous blue in the sky, a heaven-distilled gold in the sunlight, that Summer when Campion painted "C'est Vendu," using the daughter of the innkeeper for his model. The flowers that year bloomed rainbow tints, the birds chanted octaves before and after unknown, the sands of the Rhone seemed Tagus-treasure laden, and Lise herself was a thing of flesh unlike all other flesh, of blood more richly red and warmly flowing than all other blood, of eyes that were not mysterious but rather the mirror wherein mystery was reflected in plain print. The Jura was the background and that Summer the Jura knew fresh charms; soft purple and white mists wove dreams on every pale-blue slope that faded toward the shadows; the night chill was not chill nor the dawn-damp laden with wet. The goatherds remarked it as they drank wine on the bench by the inn door; the men who toiled in the vineyards confirmed their words. In after years Campion thought much on all the soft splendor of that season's mien, but he thought most of Lise and of her eyes, for only by their eyes shall ye know them—the women like Lise—speech being almost as unequal to the task of translating their thoughts as it is to one who entertains an angel knowingly.

She had sat for him every day through the months that rung all the changes from May to October; the wind coming out of the Jura had whispered to each as he passed by; the stars and the moon had revolved for that little time around those two—those two alone. It was not love, the

artist told himself, and he told himself the truth, but that it was a subtlety that drew pencil and brush in lines of marvelous strength and beauty—that swept blotches of paint together in new shadow—that made Lise the medium through which he lived for the time being. All that he felt, but never told himself at all. The world will have it that that power is love, and perhaps the world tells itself the truth; but those who must translate the ideal into the sight of man will have it that Campion was right or else that love is either wrongly named or wrongly acted. At any rate, Lise was to be married all the time and Campion knew it and no sorrow marked their October adieux, although the spirits of the Jura wept for them and wept the more because they themselves wept not at all.

Lise's outfitting was bought with Campion's money paid for board. "C'est Vendu" was boxed and shipped to Paris, and the artist himself wandered into Italy that Autumn, met Mlle. Daveau, the great heiress, in Basle, became betrothed and was married that Winter.

Years went by them, and because Mlle. Daveau was an heiress her husband ceased being an artist; "C'est Vendu" was hung in their own drawing-room, and the Brotherhood of the Easel forgot that one named Campion had ever existed. And he who had existed almost forgot the fact himself.

And more years went by, and more, and more, and more.

Campion's hair was gray, his wife was dead, his daughters were married—he lived with the elder—and "C'est

Vendu" hung in *her* drawing-room now, for she had a grand drawing-room, being the wife of a very rich banker.

"But that is a marvell!" exclaimed one day the great critic Meilnex, who was brought to the house by a friend of the banker son-in-law. "Who painted that picture?"

Campion, frail, tall, distinguished-looking, with his thin hair and thick, white mustache, rose from his arm-chair and came and stood beside Meilnex, who was some twenty years his junior.

"That was my work," he said, "my first—my last. For I had the misfortune not to court fortune, but to wed her." His tone as he looked at his picture rang oddly sad.

Meilnex laid his own delicate hand, with its veins all blue and nervously throbbing, upon the old man's shoulder.

"How is this?" he asked, looking into his face in great surprise. "You could walk thus far and then stop short? How is this?"

"Listen, and then be silent," said Campion. "There were two angels pushing my brush when I painted that picture—they were Necessity and Ambition; there were two angels beckoning through *her* eyes, Encouragement and all Nature's wonder. Those four did the picture without me, and having finished it they vanished and left me forever."

Meilnex looked pityingly upon him. "And you believed it as firmly as that!" he murmured.

"I knew it well," replied the fallen artist.

"C'est Vendu" was removed from the brocaded satin wall against which it had hung so patiently, and carried away and placed in the great world of art. It created a clamor at once, and then the news of its rare and speaking charm was carried wide as on the wings of all the eight wings of the compass. Before the end of the month Campion knew himself as one of the masters who will be talked of when their countries are become legendary. It was strange. He reflected how his wife had desired to stick the painting

into some loft at first, but how, on account of the memories that stirred across his brain whenever he recalled that Summer in the Jura, he had asked as a favor that it be left where he might see it daily. She had consented, being sweet, kindly—a good wife; his hands shook a little even now as he remembered her. His daughters examined him with curious eyes—they could not quite understand his grandeur, they who had known his humility for so many years; and his banker son-in-law was frankly awe-struck. The visitors who came all craved with humility to meet him, people turned hurriedly to look at him a second time in the street, his presence was asked to honor everyone and everywhere, he received Orders to wear—oh, it was all strange—very, very strange!

"But it doesn't ring true to me," he said to Meilnex one fair day as they walked together. "You see, it was never I; if it had been it could not have ended there; it was the Jura and her eyes—ah, yes, the Jura and her eyes." And he sighed the cruel, heart-breaking sigh of the broken.

"The marvel is none the less great," said Meilnex. "It is only that it is the more misunderstood."

"You mean—?" said Campion, turning toward him.

"*Mon ami*," said the king-critic, "the marvel is *there*"—he paused and made a sweeping gesture that seemed to comprise all, life, Paris, heaven and their two selves—"it is everywhere, above, below, within. Limitless—without any limit. Without any past, without any present, without any future. For you, for me, for all the world to draw from, on, to—as soon as we have the key. What is the key? That which you had—that which you held—that which you threw away."

"Ah," said the white-haired man beside him with a further sigh, "it is that, just that, just that."

"Friend," said Meilnex, "it comes about that because God created them 'male and female' so must they follow in His hands. We cannot any one of us create alone. She—or he—must

help. Else is the machine but half perfect—the result half what it might have been. And so is the most of the work of this world. We are but gases and compounds tossed together by chance; the chemist fills the glass and watches the spirit and the matter fight it out in foam. But once in an age they do not fight—they perform some wonder, some unexpected something instead—and then we have a turning onward of the wheel, a new re-discovery of old principles. There is no word for such a correlation in human beings, but that peasant girl was to your own personal art the solvent that made manifest." He stopped for a minute. "Do you follow me?" he asked then.

"You mean that regret is not for me," said Campion; "you mean that I never could have painted but one picture in any case—unless—?"

"I mean just that," Meilnex answered. They walked on for some little way and then the white-haired artist spoke.

"And if I returned to the Jura?" he asked.

"What, do you long for another laurel-crown?" Meilnex asked, laughing.

"Not that—but I crave her face again." His lip trembled at the thought. He had been curiously unnerved by his success.

"It will not be her face, now," the friend told him gently.

Nevertheless the artist went. He saw "C'est Vendu" hung in the Luxembourg first, and then he went. Down through Burgundy he traveled, and on, on, on to where the hills began to swell their crests and toss the branches of their trees up into the nether heavens. He came into the Jura at sunset and slept at the old inn that night.

But he slept very little, for the spirit of the Jura lingered by his open window and beckoned to him to come and learn anew the philosophy of the past, and of Meilnex, by moonlight. So loud was its call that he came at last and sat in the casement until far on toward dawn. Strange breaths of long-forgotten dreams swooped bat-like before his

eyes, and that unutterable solitude that the dead leave, nestled close with him and warned him well.

In the morning he went out and made inquiries. Yes, Lise was dead—had died years before. So he went and saw her cross in the graveyard and sat there a long, long time, thinking.

When he went back to the inn he was very quiet and he remained in his room all day. Toward eventime he walked about the town a little and then went back again to the inn, ate a meal and retired.

They found him dead the next morning.

And on his table lay a sketch, mere outlines done with a pen. Underneath was scrawled, "*Ca y est*"—no more.

"C'est Vendu" had been a canvas covered with color—the presentment of a young girl dressed as a peasant's bride and wearing a jeweled ring, the contrast of which, with her costume's simplicity, told the whole story.

But the pen sketch was nothing but a bold outline of that peak of the Jura which towered before the window of the inn, and of the mists which hung about it. It was not until it was taken out in Paris, weeks later, that anyone discovered that the mist-wreaths were two figures that wove the mountain within their spell and that floated around it in long lines of such curves and parallels as no man had hitherto described. Such effects conveyed through the medium of pen and ink had never been seen. All the cartoons of all Fame's greatest favorites seemed coarse and crude beside this simple cameo of delicate linear art.

The banker son-in-law—who was heading the subscription for that marble obelisk that bears Campion's name in *Père la Chaise*—sent for Meilnex to see the last effort of the artist's spirit.

Meilnex came and his face was a study as he gazed upon the little miracle in black and white. Then at last he laid the sheet down.

"May I suggest his epitaph?" he asked, looking up into the faces of the banker and his wife.

They were disappointed, for they had hoped to hear fresh praise of the new work. But they smothered their feelings courteously and begged for the suggestion.

The great critic fixed his eyes on the floor and touched his fingertips together in a way that he had.

"I would add to the customary inscription just the names of his two pictures," he said. "I would write upon the base of the monolith, '*C'est vendu*'—*Ca y est*."

"But that sounds like a phrase," said the artist's daughter.

"I would let it sound like a phrase," said Meilnex, and then he threw so strange and curious a glance about him that the luxury of the palace from which the dead man had been borne forth seemed to become naught in comparison to the marks upon the white paper before them.

"I would let it sound like a phrase," said Meilnex again.

And then he saluted them and went out hurriedly because his eyes were wet—very wet indeed.

"I did him an injustice," he said as he hailed a cab.



THE ANGEL

By Edward Wilbur Mason

"**A** H! who art thou that bides with me
Now all my songs are done?
Behold, my harp on yonder tree
Hangs in the setting sun!"

"Oh, I am she who goes with light,
Before the poet's way—
A wandering fire of dreams by night,
A cloud of hopes by day!"

"But all my loves have died with youth;
My joys are in the dust.
Beauty has fled, and only truth
Keeps with my bosom trust."

"Nay, I am one than these more strong,
Forever am I young:
I am the angel of the song
Your sad lips never sung!"



CLASSIFIED

WIFE—I can't find the lecture notices in the paper this morning.
SATIRICAL HUSBAND—Have you looked under "unnecessary noises"?

THE OSTRICH

By Arthur Stanley Wheeler

GREETING, Gentlest Reader! What I have to say is of a nature so personal that I shall not be able to avoid a frequent use of the egotistical pronoun, and I wish to apologize at the outset for a liberal sprinkling of "I's" and "my's." For the matter involved and the opinions expressed, I make no apology whatever. On the contrary.

A few days ago I received a letter from a friendly editor, who suggested that I undertake a novelette of from thirty thousand to sixty thousand words. "If you should undertake such a story," he wrote, "it would give us pleasure to consider it." These were stereotyped editorial phrases, of course, meaning nothing definite; but at once there leaped into my mind a story which I should have liked to write, and to which the little twittering tales that I had written would have been as sparrows to a nightingale. It was a very simple, straightforward story, of a woman who fought against poverty in a great American city and was finally beaten by it. I had known her—known several of her, in fact—and it seemed to me that no work could be more interesting or more moral than a recital of her temptations, resistance, gradual deterioration of character, and tragedy. Unpleasant? Yes, but only as the story of any creature overcome by circumstances is unpleasant; and it is the writer's business not to ignore realities, but by judicious selection and treatment to present a series of them in such a manner that they shall develop, logically and rhythmically, an idea. The question was: Had I skill enough to handle so large a subject in

the artistic way? Though I was very doubtful on that point, scenes and conversations kept appearing, full-grown, before my eyes, and it was with the greatest reluctance that I gave up the project.

If I had written my story, do you know what my editorial friend would have said?

DEAR MR. W—: It seems a shame to return to you this MS., but we feel that it is not quite suited to our purpose. Such things may be sufficiently entertaining, but the editors of popular magazines are forced to fight shy of them. Hoping to hear from you again, etc.

And he would have been justified. For in order to make the fall of my heroine reasonable, I should have had to describe the temptations with which she was beset, and incidents of that kind would not have been considered fit for the minds of the magazine's young readers—many of whom had diligently studied the entrails of a recent murder trial, as magnified by the yellow newspapers. I might, perhaps, have sugared the story with enough pious reflections to make it go down, but in my own opinion those very reflections would have condemned it as immoral, because they admitted its immorality—which I do not admit at all. And I am inclined to think that in that case, too, the editor would have refused it, since, morality aside, he would have seen that I was writing what I didn't believe.

One cannot blame the editor; he is like a gentleman perched precariously on a fence, with an angry bull on one side and an irate farmer on the other. Desperate authorlings, brandishing real-

istic manuscripts in lieu of pitchforks, threaten to shove him upon the horns of the public, and he must look to his editorial hide. Or he is a personified thermometer, continually taking the public's temperature. His affair is to see that no excitement is allowed which might produce a fever and, incidentally, shatter his glass. Moreover (deserting metaphor) we must remember that at least three-quarters of the realistic authorlings belong to that type of genius which Mr. George Ade describes with sarcasm as "Cousin Henry, whose work is too good for the publishers." Indeed, I may be a Cousin Henry myself; but I will ask you to overlook that possibility temporarily, for the sake of argument.

So my quarrel, Gentlest Reader, is not with the editors, but with you. You do not, I am informed, care to read anything that deals naturally with religious feeling, or with the relation between the sexes. You are religious—everyone is, in some fashion; is it that you are afraid of having your belief or unbelief shaken by mere words upon a printed page? Surely that cannot be the case, for if your belief (or unbelief) be strongly founded, no words can move it; and if it be weak, you will see, clever as you are, that the sooner it is shaken down and reconstructed, the better.

With regard to the sex-relation, which is even more essentially a part of every-day life, I learn that there are certain catch-phrases, catch-scenes and catch-plots which must be followed. Adultery, for instance, is allowable, provided that it has taken place before the story commences, that is: Smith's wife and Brown may have been more than friends, but the tale of their love must be lightly skimmed in half-a-page of retrospect, and the real story must have very little to do with it. "But adultery is not necessary to fiction," you answer. That is quite true, as it is quite true that a description of a sewing-circle may be just as good art as an account of a political convention, and vice versa. If you will stop and think, however, you will discover that neither

political conventions nor sewing-circles, nor yet prize-fights or pink teas, have a very vivid interest for you and your friends. It is love in which you are interested. I can give you love without adultery; I can lead the rich young hero and the genteel young heroine up to the altar and leave them stranded there like fish upon a marble slab, but—don't you ever get tired of He, She and the Automobile stories? Cheer up: by-and-bye it will be He, She and the Flying-Machine.

"What American magazines do you read in your country?" I once asked a foreign visitor.

"We don't read any of them. The stories are too childish; they always insist, whether logically or not, upon the happy ending."

The answer vexed me, because one hates to hear the institutions of his country criticized adversely, especially if he knows that the criticism is just; but as I couldn't think of any adequate defense, I prepared to change the subject. The visitor, however, had a question to ask in his turn. What foreign literature did Americans prefer? he wanted to know. And I was compelled to answer that they often preferred the spicy kind. He laughed a good deal at that, and told me of a respectable British lady-novelist who, when writing for the American trade, laboriously injected a thin stream of naughtiness, because it made her books sell.

"But there is a difference between books and magazines," I said inanely.

"So it appears, but that difference is one of the things which we cannot understand. It is like your tariff on works of art—quite incomprehensible to the alien mind."

I wanted to ask him if he thought the tariff on art was less incomprehensible to the native mind.

Another incident: I was reading some poems to a college professor who either was, or pretended to be, interested in my work. The poems were commonplace and puerile, and I am glad that they were rejected by the publishers; but that is of no conse-

quence. The point is that under the title of the longest of these effusions I had written a quotation from Oscar Wilde: "Proserpine, weary of memory, putting poppies in her hair." The professor frowned when I read the name of Wilde, and exclaimed:

"Don't dirty your paper with that name! It will disgust everybody."

I crossed out the quotation forthwith, and felt much ashamed of myself until I remembered that at that same professor's house, a week or so before, I had heard a dozen men, all of them educated and most of them over forty, tell nasty stories by the hour, each one, it seemed, nastier and more pointless than the last. Then I felt ashamed of *him*—the whited sepulchre. (I think I ought to state, in fairness, that I know many teachers who are clean-minded, and one college professor who seems to me to possess more abilities and virtues than any other man of my acquaintance.)

You, Gentlest Reader, are a lady, I am sure of it, because the majority of magazine readers are of the fair and faithful sex; and you would not listen to a smutty story, unless, perchance, it happened to be a very clever little one that your husband or brother had brought home from the club. But do you not sometimes settle yourself in a comfortable chair with the deliberate purpose of reading some book—by the British lady-novelist aforementioned, possibly—which you know will be lively in spots? Ah, don't blush! for to my mind, at least, you are only indirectly blameworthy. I don't think you are seeking nastiness, I think you are seeking, unconsciously, the human element; the stiff contortions of this literary prostitute, this middle-aged ballet-girl, galvanized for the moment into a semblance of activity, attract you because, wooden though they are, they are less wooden than the motions of American puppets pulled with a string. What I do blame you for is your stupidity, in that you choose an author who cheats you, instead of one with whom frankness is a means to an end, rather than a pur-

pose in itself. Why don't you read Balzac? You cannot read French, you say; and besides, "Balzac is dull." I will answer your second objection a little later. In the meantime let us try Shakespeare. The book falls open at one of Lady Macbeth's speeches.

I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that
milks me:

I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless
gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so
sworn as you
Have done to this.

One doesn't think about the woman's immodesty in speaking of her breast; one is carried away by the intensity of her argument. There is a kind of grandeur in her savagery, since she is urging on her husband for his interest, not her own. Above all, she is vividly human. Now see how the lines would run in good American:

I have nursed a child, and know
How tender 'tis to love a darling baby:
I would, while he was smiling in my face,
Have ruthlessly forgot my mother-love,
And thought of murder, had I so sworn, etc.

You would laugh, Gentlest Reader, if anyone proposed to modify the verses in such a way; nevertheless I assure you that if Shakespeare had not written them, but some native poet of the present day were attempting to give them to you, you would hold up hands of horror and prattle of offended chastity.

I have you there. You endure Shakespeare and you follow eagerly the heavy-footed prancing of certain novelists whose artificiality I consider indecent; but you will not let me write frankly about the conditions in which we live today and the people concerning whom you show the greatest curiosity in daily conversation. The retort is obvious: "You are neither Shakespeare nor a novelist with a reputation." I answer: "Alas, dear lady, I am lamentably conscious of my own deficiencies—I even suggest that I may be a Cousin Henry. I have gained some very trifling successes in fiction, how-

ever, and the mild approval of the few people who read my stories has encouraged me. I feel that if you would accord me one-half the liberty which you give to the foreign writers of two-deckers, I could interest you. I do not wish to write filth; I despise it. I only wish to present my characters faithfully—to show their loves, their hates, their habits and little prejudices. Not all the stories would be gloomy, nor would the gloom prevail utterly in any single one, for life's sorrow is always lightened by happiness, and true art must follow life, deviating only as it exercises instinctively the privilege of selection. If you fear that I might be tiresome, like Balzac, be reassured; I can never be dull as he is 'dull,' because I can never be great as he is great. I have not the genius which enables its owner and his admirers to enjoy wonderfully minute descriptions and analyses. My weaker stories must run more rapidly, to save their skins. Or if you are afraid lest your daughters be corrupted, suspend judgment and watch those daughters for a day or two. What do they read? The type of newspaper which specializes in hectic accounts of murder, robbery, and lust is hawked everywhere; they can scarcely avoid seeing it. In what direction do their thoughts run? They are a part of life, life is just opening before them, and their thoughts inevitably turn toward the mysteries of birth and death. And supposing that they escape the Scylla of the yellow press, do you think the Charybdis of romantic novels is less dangerous? To sentimentalize breathlessly over the impossible fortunes of Reginald Montmorency and the Princess Eglantine of Decalcomania, to dream of being a heroine like her and of having a lover like him, and then, bang! to awaken suddenly to a reality of a very different sort and not be able to adjust one's self to it: that is a fine foundation for good fortune. Innocence is not always a blessing."

Sooner or later, you must learn that life, which is unmoral, is also absolutely moral. It never preaches—it merely

teaches. The teaching is often harsh, yet so intricately and marvelously was this world in which we live planned, and so accurate are the revolutions of its mechanism, that even when we lose our fingers in the wheels we must admire, in the midst of our pain, the resistless energy that maimed us because we would not or could not take our proper places. We cannot understand the motive power; it baffles us, now enthralling, now causing us to despair; but we may be certain that there is no harm in it, since to suppose that any force or intellect could have devised such a wonderful world simply for the pleasure of being malevolent is ridiculous. And so there is no harm in the machinery, or in any book or story which interprets its details artistically, Gentlest Reader.

Sooner or later, I imagine, we of the provincial cities will have grand opera more than once a year, and at popular prices. Then Wagner and the modern French composers will become familiar to classes other than the foreigners among us, and the bediamonded wives and mistresses of the ultra-rich.

Sooner or later we shall begin to know something about art. I think that period is still far distant, however, for I remember a typical incident which occurred in a Middle-Western college town. An exhibition was to be given in the rooms of the Art and Literature Club, and pictures and statues had been gathered from the houses of the town. Among the statues were several cupids—innocuous little pagan cherubim in plaster. The hanging committee, in the absence of Madame President, had placed these small creatures, unadorned, in various more or less prominent positions. Madame President did not approve. She was willing to let the cupids stay, but around their baby tummies she tied broad blue sashes, thus rendering them, of course, quite moral! . . . I have a friend who hopes to make his living by painting portraits—God help him! He has established himself in a medium-sized New England city where there is one other portrait-painter. This

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worthy gentleman does his work as follows: First he photographs the sitter in a number of different poses, then he takes the photograph which the sitter's family consider the most life-like and makes a large copy of it in oils. The copy is the finished portrait, and so far the method and results have proved eminently satisfying to the inhabitants of the medium-sized New England city. My friend will have a hard time, I fear; for, in addition to his rival, he must struggle against conditions indicated by the fact that the word "artist" is still used as a term of opprobrium.

Sooner or later those hideosities in New York—I mean the skyscrapers—will be leveled, and in their places will arise buildings pleasing to the eye and quite as well suited to the purpose. The business portion of the city will spread over the island, thus relieving the congestion, and across the rivers residence communities will grow up in which the dwellings will be worthy to be called American homes. And men will look back upon this age of cave-dwellers as we look back upon the barbarous cave-dwellers of the distant Past.

Sooner or later, too—but why predict a millennium?

There is another side to my subject, one which would seem farcical if it were not so nearly tragic. A New York friend of mine, who works in a trust company, bromidically said: "I never read anything but the lightest sort of stuff now, and never go to the theatre except to see comic opera. I work hard all day, and when evening comes I want to be amused. To the devil with realism in literature and the drama! I see enough realism in the course of every-day existence." Said a second, the business manager of a trade journal: "When I'm on the road I buy magazines at one station and chuck 'em out to the newsdealer at the next. Everything in 'em has been done before in France."

The first man's view was the more reasonable; he had worked hard all day and wanted to be amused at night. But unconsciously he surrendered the

key to his fortress. "I see enough realism in every-day existence," he added. Existence: what an especially descriptive word! He is not living, he is existing, and the years which should have strengthened him have devitalized him instead, so that he craves amusement to quiet his aching nerves, as the dope-fiend craves his drug. One day's work is exactly like another's, and the fear of losing his place sits on his shoulders like the Black Dog of legend; he has no ambition left for the enjoyment of the books and plays which once interested him. For he is not, mark you, one of those low-browed toilers who have been condemned to labor for pitiful wages and to know few pleasures save that of getting drunk at the end of the week. He is simply a man who has allowed his education to be stifled in the crush of business. He knows virtually nothing outside of cheques and adding-machines and the names of Broadway favorites, and if the trust company which hires him should go to the wall, he would be lost until he found another trust company made in the same mold. There are thousands of his sort in this morbidly strenuous semi-barbarism of ours.

The living (not merely existing) business man will usually recognize and enjoy a forceful story if he can be induced to read it. He does not understand Mr. Henry James, but on the other hand, he is versed in matters which are as Choctaw to Mr. James's able translators. His opinion is often clearer than that of a literary expert, and companionship with him is a window through which the student may see the world of action and profit thereby.

For the other New Yorker's attitude I can find no excuse, and no reason except this: he once had literary aspirations himself and was disappointed in them. It is not true that everything in our magazines has been done before in a foreign language, although, as I have admitted throughout this article, many of the stories are childish drivel. And if it were true, he would

be partly responsible, just as he is partly responsible for the present condition. He has good taste; he loves Wagner, and has taught his children to love Wagner. (I have heard him argue that Wagnerian music can be sung as effectively by portly human drygoods-boxes as by singers who are actresses, but that is simply a difference of opinion between us.) Moreover, he earns more than enough money for his living expenses and wields quite a little influence. He might give perceptible encouragement to literature if he would. He prefers to buy magazines in order to feed fat his reminiscent jealousy, and then vents his spleen by chucking 'em out of the car-window. I love that verb "chuck." Employing it, I think of my friend, fair, fat and complacent. Should he chance to read my paragraph about him, I hope he will believe that I remember not only what seem to me his faults, but also, and with gratitude, his cheerfulness, his kindness, and his sane views on many subjects. To caricature him was far from my intention.

In your subtler feminine way, Gentlest Reader, you resemble the first of these New Yorkers. You are neurotic and you crave amusement. You exist too fast—and by this I mean nothing against your character, but that you give yourself too little true leisure; that in the constant scurry and hustle you lose all sense of proportion and spend your strength upon things of which many do not matter in the least. Then, nervous and jaded, you come to me with the idea of having your thoughts soothed rather than excited. Yet you don't read slowly! You read as if you were expecting an interruption, as if you were compelled to finish the story immediately, without considering the number of pages. I will not scold you for skipping; I will merely reiterate that if you would allow me one-half the liberty which you give to your favorite novelist, and which you give to yourself in conversation, I feel sure I could interest you. All schools of fiction must stand or fall, in the end, by that quality—the ability to interest. In the end,

yes; but how if a beginning be made impossible? I can't furnish you your money's worth when you forbid the editors to pass any of my stories in which the characters talk like men and women.

I am an optimist and I believe in your intelligence; in time, you will listen to me. It is my nature to be persistent and I differ from the majority of Cousin Henrys in this respect: I am willing, while awaiting recognition for the work which is "too good for the publishers," to prove that I can write stories which are bad enough for them. To write something every now and then is as natural to me as to breathe, and perhaps I may be excused for remarking that I need the pennies which my efforts occasionally bring in. Just now I have a novelette in preparation—vice the other story resigned. The main characters are a nice young man and an equally nice young woman, and he says to her in a deep, tremulous tone:

"Dearest (pronounce *dairrest*), you know I love you. Will you marry me?"

She has never suspected that anything like this was coming off, but she manages to gasp quaveringly:

"Oh, Chetwynd"—that is his front name, and I think it is rather a master-stroke—"oh, Chetwynd, I don't know what to say! I'll have to speak to mother. But I think—I *think* the answer will be—Yes!"

And with the tiniest of coy glances she darts into the house, leaving him alone with his happiness on the fragrant veranda.

That is a good device, that darting-into-the-house one, because they are both in regulation evening armor, and if she allowed herself to be "crushed in his arms," the violets she is wearing would stain his shirt-bosom, a catastrophe distinctly unromantic. Besides, I wish to accentuate Ethelberta's modesty.

I opine this scene will be just too lovely for words.

And now I thank you for your kind attention, Gentlest Reader, though I imagine you have not read more than

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one word in twenty, and I make before you my profound salaam. Or maybe you will shake hands with me in token of forgiveness. In any case, I bid you *au revoir* and not *adieu*, for we shall meet again.

One moment: I had nearly forgotten

to explain the title. Are you not, Gentlest Reader, the ostrich—a very lady-like one, but still an ostrich—who hides her head in the sand and imagines that her pursuers will not see her? The pursuers are your own good desires, and the name of the sand is hypocrisy.



FROM ATTIC TO SELLER

By Blanche Elizabeth Wade

A POET poor, whose soul held lofty thought,
 Sat down to pen his message to mankind;
 And that it might a worthy hearing find,
 Full many days with utmost care he sought
 Expression for the thing his brain had wrought,
 Until in highest form of verse, his mind
 Set forth a sonnet perfectly designed.
 Then, since he could not give his gem for naught
 He cried it in the literary mart.
 Long waited he. ***** These stars the months denote.
 Then came a cheque; he read it much dismayed,
 And downward quickly went his sinking heart—
 The editor weighed not the *sense*, please note,
 But by the line, so many *cents* he paid.

The poet's soul, we said, held lofty thought.
 It held, thank goodness, also, mines of wit!
 So, no more sense appeared in what he wrought,
 And into three
 Or four,
 Each line
 He
 Split.

To lengthy meter classic, fourteen lined,
 No more his genius felt itself confined.
 His thoughts in lines no less than forty mingle,
 And now, his *coins* as well as *verses* jingle.



OH, THOSE BILLS!

SNEERWELL—They say genius is seldom bothered with book-keeping.
 MUSICIAN—Yes, it is—with other people's.

June, 1908—4

AT SANDY DEVIL ISLAND

By Charles Warren

THE room was very still. In one corner where the President sat working at a table, a ship's binnacle light suspended over his head threw a glare on the heaps of papers in front of him. There was no other light in the room except the brilliant orange flame of the great fire of Southern pine logs.

Leland was seated astride a bench, scrupulously cleaning a gun and peering through the barrel at the fire, as if this, and not the law, was his real occupation in life. A gun-rack was on the wall behind him, a stack of neatly cased fishing-rods leaning up against it. A huge rough-hewn stone fireplace spread nearly the whole width of the room and along its face a splendid tarp-on glittered. Over the door streamed a yacht's pennant and a private signal. Loafing-chairs, small tables, and skins were everywhere about the room, as if tossed carelessly into it. Archie Morgan, "the Major," was untangling a mess of fishing-lines. Tronde, the Great Actor, was stretched out magnificently on a long, low, canvas-bottomed chair, while at his side, accessible to the least possible effort, stood a small table bearing several siphons, a bottle of Scotch whisky, a glass jar of cigars, and a large oystershell heaped up with ashes and butts.

For ten minutes no remark had disturbed the silence except a ruminating ejaculation from the Actor:

"You don't know what solid comfort this is, Brighton, after six days on that cranky, wobbly yacht of Leland's."

The statement had received no answer, for Brighton, the owner of this hunting-box on Sandy Devil Island,

was out of the room at the time. The other members of the Waifs' Club felt too lazy to indulge in the effort of speech.

The fire snapped and sizzled; a bottle clinked on the edge of a glass. Leland laid down his gun, and taking a cob pipe up off the floor, leaned his back against a corner of the fireplace in placid contemplation. Outside the sea washed soothingly up the sandy shore and back. Ten more minutes went by. Then the President crashed his hand down on the pile of papers, and rose.

"Finished," he said. "Give me a cigar, Hugh." The Actor, without raising himself in his chair, extended a box.

"What is it now, the same old foreign difficulty?" drawled Leland, with his pipe in his mouth.

The President was about to reply when Brighton entered the room, a rush of cool air and a pungent smell of seaweed following him.

"As I've only got one day here, Brighton, I'll make the most of it," the President greeted him. "How early can I get at the birds?"

"Well, there's a high tide about four o'clock in the morning. If you leave about three-quarters of an hour before then, you can reach the duck blinds on the mainland in time to set your decoys and bag your birds conveniently on the ebb when the tide turns."

"All right. We'll make it an all-day trip and I'll try the afternoon tide, too. Have you a good man to go with me?"

"First-class. Jake Murfree—lazy devil as ever lived, and good for nothing else; but the keenest sportsman

you ever saw. I picked him up at Bolttown, over on the mainland just across from here, last year. He'd just arrived, drifted in from out in Kentucky. How he makes a living, I don't know. I never heard of his doing a stroke of work. But down here on this Southern Coast a man can exist without making more effort than is required to get out of bed and eat. Jake knows, however, all there is to know about the birds, and he'll smell them if they're anywhere within ten miles. He'll tramp or row any distance to get a shot, and he never misses except through some accident."

"That's a very promising description," said the President. "Kentucky men are generally good shots, especially if they're from the mountains. By the way, is there much shooting done round here?"

"Not much," said Brighton. "This part of the coast isn't very well known. Dexter Travers, the United States Marshal for this district, drops down here occasionally. You ought to know him. Perhaps you appointed him. He's a crack shot. He spent a week with me last season."

"I know him," said the President.

"You and he will just miss each other. He's coming over to this shooting-box of mine next week. Then, also occasionally, I can get Manningly to come down, or a few other selected Waifs like the specimens on hand here. But for the most part the shooting is done by the natives and me; and as I said before, Jake Murfree, who's only a recent 'native,' is the best of them all."

"Is it known down here that I'm with you?" asked the President.

"No," said Brighton. "You dropped in so unexpectedly on Leland's yacht that there hasn't been any advance news. You ought to have an interesting day, and the chances are you won't even be recognized."

"They'll know you from your pictures," said Leland.

The Major looked up with a twinkle in his eye. "When the President puts on that respectable canvas suit, that tenderloin flannel shirt, and that vil-

lainous slouch hat, it would be a clever man who would recognize him," he remarked.

Long, steady breathing from the various rooms and the creaking of the stairs were the only sounds in the house when the President left, the next morning.

There was a wan, yellow light around the Eastern horizon, and the dull black sea was slowly changing and showing pale gleams here and there. A cool breeze with a slight nip in it was blowing from the southeast, and the sail of the small boat at the pier was flapping briskly.

The man who had sailed it over from Bolttown stood on the pier, a lanky, scrawny, stalwart personage. He scrutinized the President in a half-interested way, and with no sign of recognition.

"Good day for birds?" asked the President.

Murfree jerked his head up and down and paused for a considerable time before drawing out, "I've seen worse. Might be some up Lone Pine Creek way. Ain't the other fellers coming?"

"No; they are too fond of their sleep to start off at this hour."

The President stepped down into the boat, looking curiously at the decoys which covered the bottom. Jake handed down the guns, after examining them with a somewhat languid interest. Then with great deliberation he crawled down the piles, fell off into the cock-pit, lighted his pipe, crossed his leg over the tiller and slowly shook out the sail.

"I told 'em up yonder," he said, pointing to the hunting-box, "I'd take yer north over Rice Beach way, but I'd'n reckon ez the birds'll be up thar this morning; so we'll beat down over toward the Crik. We'll knock down more'n a dozen thar."

The President nodded and looked satisfied at the tone of confidence. The man evidently knew what he was about.

The pale yellow spread around the rim of the sea, and a deep purple splashed with golden shafts surmount-

ed it. The water began to sparkle and grow bluer and bluer. The wind sent the waves tumbling and foaming higher along the sand. The white sail grew smaller and smaller, as the boat zigzagged across the channel between Sandy Devil Island and the coast of the mainland, and finally dropped out of sight behind a tree-covered point.

At eight o'clock that morning the Major drifted downstairs and with absolute recklessness of time slowly ate his breakfast. An hour later Leland and Brighton appeared on the scene, and Tronde strolled carelessly into the room just as the ship's chronometer on the wall was striking four bells.

During the morning the Major and Leland, taking the steam launch belonging to the yacht, the *Condor*, dropped out in a cove off the end of the island and pretended to fish energetically. The Actor said he "guessed he'd fish in a tall glass and catch as much"; and at once ordered his chair and a table to be brought out upon the piazza in the sun and a siphon to be placed within easy reach.

After lunch, as the afternoon passed away, the wind began to freshen and veered from the east. The sea outside and even the channel between the mainland and the island lost its gleam and grew dark and sullen, spotted with myriad whitecaps.

"The President'll get well shaken up, coming across this afternoon in a sailboat," said the Major. "See the *Condor* pitch," he pointed to the yacht which was lying off the island.

"We'll have a nice rough trip, all right, up the coast tonight," Leland remarked, as he watched the *Condor's* bow give a particularly vicious plunge.

The Actor groaned. "What amazing idiotic imbeciles are they that go down to the sea in boats," he murmured.

At about half-past five o'clock the clouds had become thick and black and the sun had entirely disappeared.

Brighton was pacing up and down the piazza with his watch in his hand, looking across the channel to the north.

He felt a little puzzled to know why no sail appeared, coming from the direction of Rice Beach. "However, they are probably having so good sport they don't notice the weather or the time," he said to himself, and he went in to join the other men at billiards.

An hour later it had grown almost totally dark. Brighton scanned the waters with a field-glass as best he could. The Major joined him.

"Where the devil is the President?" he asked.

Brighton shook his head. "If he doesn't get back pretty soon," he replied, "I think we'd better take the launch and look him up."

The Major whistled as he noted the height of the waves.

At seven o'clock the President had not appeared. All four men were by this time extremely nervous. Brighton racked his brain to frame possible reasons for the President's delay in returning. Most unpleasant explanations kept forcing themselves upon him.

At eight o'clock he could stand the uncertainty no longer.

"Roger," he said to Leland, "I think the 'Maje' and I will drop over to the mainland in the launch and see if anything has happened."

At this the Actor became energized for the first time that day. "I'm going, too," he insisted. "As a sportsman, I want to see what a President-hunt is like."

The others did not laugh, but walked down the pier in anxious silence. The three men rather overloaded the little craft in the heavy sea, but they steamed steadily on across the channel toward the spot where the scattered lights of Bolttown were faintly piercing the thick blackness of the night.

In fifteen minutes they ran in alongside the rickety, solitary pier of a little town. Standing up in the bow, Brighton gave a sudden exclamation.

"Thank God, there's Murfree's boat, tied up there now. The President must have put in here."

They scrambled on shore and walked up into a little store at the head of the pier.

They found a slouchy group of men sitting around on the counter, who seemed to be greatly disinclined to answer questions about Murfree, as if suspicious of the questioner's motive. But at last Brighton was able to elicit the following:

"Yes, Jake, he came back from ducking 'bout noon today."

"Noon!"

"Yes. Yes, 'bout that time."

"Wasn't there anyone with him?"

"Nope, no one. Nobody but Jake."

"What direction had he come from?"

No one had noticed and he had not said. He had simply tied his boat to the pier and gone up to his hut.

Greatly worried at this information the three men hurried out into the street, and to the hut where they learned Murfree had his headquarters. An old darky woman there said that Jake had come back in the boat looking rather "miser'ble." "Yes, honey, 'most skeered." He had no ducks or birds with him. He had packed up a few of his belongings in a bundle, had saddled his mule and ridden off inland, saying he might not be back for a few days. He had seemed "in a right smaht hurry."

At this the three men became very grave indeed. Evidently something had happened, but what? They were afraid to guess. They hastened back to the launch after providing themselves from the store with armfuls of pine torches. No one of them dared to put into words what he feared.

"Set her course to Rice Beach, and hit her up at top speed," was Brighton's order to the engineer.

The sea tumbled in over the bow and soaked their clothes; the cold wind and rain drove in horizontal blasts; but they sat with their eyes fixed on the coast line to the north. After a while they headed for the shore.

"Bad surf," said the engineer.

"No matter," replied Brighton, in a strained voice. "Go right in by the ducking blind."

Although almost overturned two or three times by the rollers, they finally made a landing and examined the

whole beach with torches and lanterns.

"The President hasn't been here today at all, I'm confident," said the Major. "There's been no one here. There's not the slightest sign of them, no empty shells, or footsteps, or anything of the kind round. The rain and tide wouldn't wipe out every trace. He evidently didn't shoot here."

Reluctantly they went back to the launch.

"Where now?" asked Tronde, with a suspicion of a shake in his voice. Brighton looked haggard. It was eleven o'clock at night. By this time the President ought to have been well on his way back to Washington.

"We'll try every creek and blind on the coast around here," he said.

So they steamed slowly along, time and again barely escaping being swamped by the lumpy waves. They wound in and out of creeks and coves, behind points and headlands, penetrating swamps and lagoons. They landed wherever it was possible. They shouted and shouted, and waved their torches which sizzled in the rain through the still, inky darkness—but they got no answer. In fact, Brighton began almost to realize that in the bottom of his heart he expected none.

About one in the morning the three men, soaking with salt water, chilled by the gale, were completely worn out and discouraged, fearful of the worst.

"By God, this is terrible!" cried the Major hoarsely.

"For heaven's sake, 'Maje,'" whispered Tronde, "don't *you* lose courage. You're a soldier, remember. Besides, the darkness is making babies of us all. Nothing has really happened. The President's simply lost his way and is wandering round in some of those beastly swamps on this coast. It's merely a question of time when we find him."

"But that doesn't explain—Murfree," groaned the Major.

Tronde himself realized that he could allege no such simple reason for Murfree's actions. Brighton said nothing, but shivered. He remembered now

that there was something in Murfree's face which he had never liked—an untrustworthy look; and he cursed himself for his carelessness in allowing the President to go off alone with such a man. Then he pictured again to himself the country as it would be when the news should be flashed over the wires tomorrow.

"Well, we'll keep at it all night, anyway," Tronde said. "Cheer up, boys." He tried to hum a popular tune of the day, but the effort was miserably unsuccessful.

Suddenly the Major called out sharply, "What's that?"

"What?"

"Didn't you hear a shot? Listen!"

They kept absolutely still. The launch puffed; the wind whiffled past; the seas whacked the bows; but they heard nothing else for some time. Then there came, faintly but unmistakably, the sound of the firing of a gun to the south of them.

"Where's that from?" Tronde asked.

Brighton considered for a moment; then he answered, "Sounds as if it came from Pampelly Creek way. I wonder—yes—of course, they may have gone down there—although Murfree certainly told me they were going north."

They headed the launch around southward, and steamed slowly toward Pampelly Creek, almost in the teeth of the storm. It took some time to reach the spot, but as they approached they shouted and shouted again.

"Here's the blind," cried Brighton. "Look out for the rollers." Before the launch reached the shore all three jumped over into the water. They found plenty of evidence that the President had been there that day; but the most careful search failed to discover him there now.

Was it possible that the sound of the gun had been a mere figment of excited imagination? The disappointment was terrible. They pushed off from the shore quite at a loss where to go. Then out of the stillness of the night came another shot, this time near at hand. Again they set up a

hoarse shouting. There came in answer the sound of a human voice. There was no doubt about it. They recognized the tones and almost split their throats in answering it.

"Put her right in—never mind the rollers!" shouted Brighton. Soon the outline of the coast loomed once more.

In a few minutes the President himself was on board the launch, cold, shivering, wet, angry, and extremely forcible in his language.

"What happened? We've been terribly anxious about you," said Tronde at length, seeing that Brighton was feeling the strain too much to be able to converse.

"Why did you let Murfree go off with the boat?" the Major asked.

The President's reply was explosive.

"Let him! He took it; stole it; left me high and dry."

"High and wet, I should say," interposed Tronde.

"Stole it!" exclaimed the Major.

"And here I've been, tumbling round in your Carolina swamps and morasses and creeks, tearing my way through thickets and forests and trying to find a way out ever since one o'clock this—no—yesterday afternoon. Didn't you hear my gun? Ever since I discovered that I couldn't find any way of escape except by swimming, I've been firing signal-guns for help at long intervals since five o'clock."

"The wind's been the wrong way," observed the Major.

"It's lucky, then, that you heard these last shots. I've only two cartridges left. I'd given up all hope that anyone would turn up tonight, and had almost dozed off to sleep, but I happened for one moment to catch a glimpse of your launch's lantern far off down the channel, and I thought I'd make one last try."

"Come, tell us, how did it happen?" reiterated Tronde, placing his hand fondly on the President's shoulders.

The President's indignation increased as he continued his story.

"We started about four o'clock this—no—yesterday morning. Mr. Jake Murfree seemed a pretty good fellow.

He knew everything about shooting and we had an interesting chat about birds, as we sailed over the coast. We ran down the channel and struck the blind just before dead high tide. Murfree set out the decoys, and though he seemed lazy in other ways, he was certainly quick at getting the birds. The birds began to settle with the ebb, and we had good luck all the morning. And how that man could pick them off! He had the eye of a fish-hawk.

"Finally, as the shooting became poorer, the man said that he'd row me down the coast south from Rice Creek blind. He was obliged to row as there wasn't any chance to sail. We found a few more birds and then we decided to rest till the afternoon tide.

"We had some talk over various good shots and I asked him if he knew Travers. You remember you told me the Marshal had shot with you here, and I thought possibly Murfree had gone off with him also. Well, something I said about Travers seemed to worry Murfree. I suppose I must have suggested in some way my own identity. I may have said something about Travers's appointment. Then I told him Travers was coming down here soon and I should rely on him to give Travers the same good sport he'd given me. This seemed to shut him up tighter than before. I was sorry that aroused his suspicions, because the thought of my identity seemed to overpower him. I noticed that he kept looking around in an uneasy way, but I continued a careless conversation as if nothing had happened out of the usual.

"Suddenly he jumped up and said that he wanted to make sure the boat was fastened all right, as the tide was falling and he didn't want it left too high and dry. He ran around a clump of bushes while I stayed behind, lying on my back in the sand, watching the clouds. Then I heard the oarlocks creaking, and wondering what was happening, I rose and strolled down to the shore. There I saw Murfree rowing away rapidly down the little creek. I shouted to him to know what he was

doing. He didn't answer, but twisting his head to keep his course he pulled away harder than I've ever seen a man work; and then when he'd broken out into the channel he hoisted his sail, and was running down before the wind toward Bolttown.

"So there I was—alone—and, well, I've told you the rest. Now, what do you make of it all? Is the man crazy? Or what was the reason for his marooning me in that way? I haven't been able to frame any reasonable explanation."

By this time the launch had nearly reached the pier on Sandy Devil Island, and the cheerful lights of the hunting-box shone close at hand.

"I'll be damned if I can make head or tail of it all," replied Brighton, after a pause.

"Nor I," said the Major.

"It beats the plot of a modern farce comedy for general haziness," came from Tronde.

They found Leland a very lonely and a very depressed man after his long, solitary vigil.

A heap of pine-cones and pine-logs, a plentiful supply of bottles and siphons, and their pipes, blackened and sweetened by six days' constant usage on the cruise, served, however, to restore all to a highly comfortable state of mind and body. A departure from the island at that hour was not to be thought of, for the President was too greatly exhausted to make any further exertion. And after the strain of the night's anxiety the whole party were quite willing to take a late breakfast the next morning.

The *Condor* did not leave Sandy Devil Island until nearly noon; and it was nearly twenty-four hours after she was expected that the yacht dropped anchor in the Potomac.

Three days later Brighton sailed over to Bolttown to purchase some fishing-lines. In the little store he found the same slouchy, listless group of men, looking as if they had not stirred since he was last there.

"Anything heard of Jake Murfree?" he asked cheerfully.

One of the group slowly removed a quid of tobacco and looked sullenly at Brighton.

"Oh, they cotched him, all right, sah."

Brighton gave a start. "What do you mean?"

"Y' ought ter know. Reckon 'twas yer doings."

Brighton was puzzled. "I don't understand. I haven't had anything to do with Murfree."

"Who was it that put the Marshal on ter him?" asked another member of the group.

"The Marshal!"

"We know, sah, the Pres'dent's been down hyar, sah. We know he put the Marshal on ter Jake. The fac' is, Mistah Brighton, sah, we're right soh 'bout thet."

Gradually Brighton gathered the whole story. It seemed that Mr. Jake Murfree had been a greatly wanted man out in the State of Kentucky; that he had been indicted there by a Federal Grand Jury as a moonshiner and also for the shooting of a Federal Deputy. It was easy to see now where Murfree had acquired his skill at shooting—the United States marshals had been on his track for over a year and had at last traced him down to this sea-coast town where they had caught him three days ago just as he was hurriedly leaving.

"But what do you imagine that I or the President had to do with all this?" asked Brighton. "We didn't know who Murfree was."

"Ah don't know 'bout thet, sah," answered one of the men. "Jake tol' us yestahday thet the Pres'dent knew him and tol' him Marshal Travers was comin' down aftah him. We reckon thet the Pres'dent was havin' a right smart joke with Jake, knowin', all the time, sah, he was puttin' the Marshal on his track."

The mystery of the marooning of the President became suddenly clear to Brighton. He recalled the simple reference to Travers of which the Presi-

dent had told. Evidently Murfree had viewed the President as personally on his trail.

And naturally Murfree had been anxious to escape at the earliest possible moment from this highly undesirable proximity to the supreme administration of the Federal Criminal Law.

The newspapers never acquired any knowledge of the episode, but the members of the Waifs' Club well remember the "Political Night Dinner" when it was narrated to them with such vividness.

That dinner, although apparently predestined to be a doleful failure, had been quite the reverse. The idea of it had originated with Karnegan.

"It is now the month of March," he had said to the Secretary. "What more appropriate month than this to have the lion and the lamb lie down together? Let's invite as guests the official heads of both political parties and ask each to expound the merits of his opponents. Then the Club can preserve the balance by telling the impartial truth about the non-existence of merit in either."

On the night of the dinner the following legend, blazoned forth on the wall of the dining-room hall, greeted the guests:

"A politician is a man who before election promises reforms and after election re-forms his promises."

At this epigrammatic unveiling of their true characters the politicians looked troubled. As the Secretary quoted:

Democrats turned red, Republicans turned pale,
What Mugwumps turned 'tis difficult to think,
But probably they compromised on pink.

The Club's political creed was summed up by Wycom in some verses which Manningly had termed "Wycom's method of making noises in metre." The last stanza ran:

We care not a jot for this sixteen to one,
 We don't give a hoot for protection.
 The payment of taxes we carefully shun,
 We don't cast our votes at election.
 The statesman, the boss, whether lofty or mean,
 The rise or the fall of the Trust,
 The black man, the grafter, the brown Filippine,
 All fill us with wearied disgust.
 We're sick of the yawp and the blithering bleat
 Of orators, living and dead;
 All we want is to jest and to sing and to eat,
 And to thoughtlessly laugh when we're fed.

Longstreth, on being requested by the President to serve as "chief roaster at this political barbecue," announced that in his opinion Archbishop Magee adequately characterized all political parties when he replied to Lord Salisbury, who wanted to explain to him how the Tories proposed to deal with the temperance question, "My Lord, it isn't the dealing I object to, it's the shuffling."

Then the President rose and said that

he was now going to throw the guests into the arena. "The Puritans objected to bear-baiting," he said, "not because it gave pain to the bears, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators. This Club objects neither to the pain nor to the pleasure. By way of introduction I now present to this Club, on a charger, the heads of the two parties of this State, each believed by himself to be an example of distinguished, unbigoted non-partisanship."

After the guests had attempted to parry the President's passes, Breighton was called on.

"I'm going to read you a story of an unrecorded episode in modern politics. It's rather long, but truth is always everlasting" he said, and he began:

"The room was very still. In one corner, where the President sat working at a table, a ship's binnacle light, suspended over his head, threw a glare on the heap of papers in front of him. . ."



POPPIES

By W. R. De Forest

TOSSING her brilliant petals,
 Gorgeous the poppy stands;
 Frailest of Summer's blossoms
 Winged from the fairy lands.
 Gaily she bends and dances,
 Toy of the lightest breath.
 Hush! would you know her secret?
 In the heart of her heart lies death.

Scattering smiles like petals,
 Kin to the Summer flowers,
 Centre of earth's light laughter,
 Plaything of idle hours;
 Ah, it is only a woman,
 Weary beyond belief.
 Hush! would you know her secret?
 In the heart of her heart lies grief.

CAREW CARTER'S ENDLESS CHAIN

By Morgan Hastings

LINKS IN THE CHAIN

DORIS ("*first walking lady*")

PAULINE (*confidante, later rival to Doris*)

HELEN (*third in succession*)

MRS. JACK WESTLAKE ("*the dark horse*")

EPILOGUE—*as far as we know.*

TO MISS PAULINE WESTCOTE, "THE
HOLLOW," WILLOWOOD, L. I.

HAZELMERE HUNT CLUB, JUNE 12.

POLLY LOVE:

Only a line (and a few blots) to say that Carew Carter is giving me a dinner at the Club Saturday night—just eight of us, and I've asked a stunning man for you.

Don't fail me, now; you *must* come. I want you to be especially nice to Mr. Stockton and cut out Carrol Bailey. He seems to be awfully taken with her, and I don't think she is half good enough for him; so do your best, honey, to be a life-preserver, and wear your prettiest gown.

I am very anxious, too, to have you meet Carew—he is not anything wonderful to look at and he is getting quite bald. As baby Ruth says, "His head is coming through his hair"; but he is dear, and so generous to me that I'm quite crazy about him.

Lovingly and in haste,

DORIS.

MISS PAULINE WESTCOTE TO MISS HELEN
MORRIS

WILLOWOOD, L. I., JUNE 20.

DEAREST HELEN:

As you can see by the heading, I am staying with Aunt Elizabeth, and hav-

ing the most beautiful time with the domestic problem. One week we haven't a soul, and the next we have both the coming and going "blessings" all at once.

If only they did brighten as they "took their departure" I would not mind this kind of progressive house-keeping. One would be glad when they gave notice, and expect them to do wonders on their "last days." But the proverb does not hold good; I'm afraid they are *not* blessings, after all, only curses, going home continually to roost. Aunt Elizabeth says they are the real leisure class of America.

One word of friendly warning—"Never introduce your pal to your lady friend," and don't be the "lady friend," either, if you can help it.

Doris Kane is furious with me, all because Carew Carter asked me to play tennis and have tea with him last Tuesday afternoon, and left her out. I'm awfully sorry it happened, for I really thought she was coming too, but when I got to the Club there was no one there but ourselves—Mr. Carter and I—and Doris was very crusty when I told her about it.

I forgot to tell you that Carew Carter is the man who gave that stunning dinner for Doris, last Saturday night at the Club, the one I wrote you I was going to attend. I don't really fancy

him much, but he was lovely to me that night and Doris did not like it at all.

You see, Doris played me rather a mean trick, I think. On one side of me at the table she put Willis Denby, who is good enough to look at, but is one of those social sinkers—you know the kind, they swell up their chests, look at you condescendingly, and say "yes" and "no" to everything you utter, and you finish the dinner feeling like a squeezed lemon, conversationally. On the other side I had a three-eighths and one sleeve view of Arthur Stockton, who devoted himself entirely during dinner to Carrol Bailey. Doris asked me as a life-preserver; what she really needed was a grappling-iron. I'm sure he did not know at the end of the evening whether I was fifteen or fifty.

Doris herself was making great running with the man on her right, so as Mr. Carter and I were rather "frozen out" we talked across the table.

You know he is one of those nice, stringy old bachelors, who like to play a sort of game of "I'm in Dixie's land, you can't catch me" with every attractive girl they meet. There is a fearful joy in seeing how near they can come to getting caught before they have to "back paddle."

Dear old things, what would we do without them! They are a kind of "runner up" for the men we finally marry.

He has begged me to dine with him this Saturday night. Doris says she won't go and I don't know what to do. It is silly of Doris to make such a fuss over it all. I don't want her suitor and I'm no grafter and I do believe women should stand together in these things, but I can't very well be rude to the man. Now, put yourself in my place—would you?

Devotedly,

POLLY.

MISS PAULINE WESTCOTE TO MISS
HELEN MORRIS

JUNE 28.

Yes, Helen love, I went. About four o'clock Saturday afternoon Aunt Elizabeth drove me down to the Club, and as there did not seem any real

reason why I should look a fright just because I was going to try to do missionary work, I put on my new Paquin, the lovely white one with the dots, that Billy says looks like double-sixes in dominos.

Carew Carter was walking around looking for me, and we went over at once to one of the benches by the tennis-court, and there we had a long, serious talk. I told him I would not stay and dine because Doris was not coming.

"But aren't you ever going anywhere with me," he asked rather impatiently, "unless Doris goes too?"

I shook my head solemnly. "No," I said. There was silence for a minute, and then he looked up with a twinkle in his eye.

"If I married Doris, then," he asked, "I suppose you would not mind going anywhere with me?" And we both laughed.

"Don't you think you are making it rather hard for me, though?" he said. "I can't marry Doris now—she would not have me—and as long as I remain an old bachelor it seems you won't trust me. So there is only one way out of the difficulty that I can see."

"Yes," I cut in. "I was thinking of that too; I might exchange you for someone else."

"Exchange me!" he said blankly.

"Yes; you know, let Doris get a man from me. There is Billy Waring, for instance. I could tell him he was to be exchanged for you and I know he would not mind giving her a rush to please me."

"Billy!" he interrupted disgustedly. "I would not feel flattered if she was satisfied with that—"

"Oh, well," I said soothingly, "I could throw in Algy for full weight." And now I won't bore you with details, but we talked some more nonsense until I looked at my watch and saw it was after seven, so we hurried back to the Club. There I found that Aunt Elizabeth had not waited for me, and I really did not know what to do. If Mr. Carter walked home with me he would lose his dinner at the Club, and I could not ask him to stay at

Aunt Elizabeth's because the cook had just left and we were going to dine on *pâté de fois gras* sandwiches and self-heating beans. No devotion could stand that, so while I was trying to decide some other men came up to talk with us, and that awfully nice Mr. Browne said:

"See here, Miss Westcote, you must stay and dine and I'll find a chaperon somewhere." So I did. There really was not anything else I could do.

I don't know what Doris will say when she hears of it, but truly it was not my fault, and I was horrid to Carew and flirted with the other men all evening, just to be fair to Doris. Could any girl expect greater loyalty from her best friend than that?

Always devotedly,

POLLY.

MISS PAULINE WESTCOTE TO MISS
HELEN MORRIS

JUNE 31.

HELEN DEAREST:

I'm so glad you think I was perfectly fair about it, and I'm going to give a dinner and have them both there. I call it my "peace party." Doris is staying with me now and we have talked it all over.

Billy is coming for her, I've asked Louise Deming for Dick, and I suppose I shall have to take care of Carew Carter myself (until they make it up, anyhow); then I've asked Clarence and that stunning widow, Mrs Jack Westlake. She is awfully fascinating, and Doris and I decided if she cut us both out we'd have to make common cause against the enemy; and then we got to laughing over the idea of how Carew Carter would feel if he really thought we were pining for him. I think he'd run and never stop this side of the Rockies. Poor man, I call it "Much Ado About Nothing," but he is good for champagne dinners and someone might as well get the benefit of them, so as Doris got him first I'm going to play fair.

I've made Dick promise solemnly not to take the men in a corner and talk stocks. You know how they get—just like raisins in a pudding; when you

really need them—never mind mixed metaphors, I'll write you all about it next time.

Devotedly,

POLLY.

P. S. The bottom has dropped out of Union Specific. You remember Dick invested all my matrimony (I can't call it patrimony because the Mater gave it to me) in it, and I'm feeling awfully poor; reckon I'll have to cut out wine and give them a "Carrie Nation" dinner. Dick says snow-balls with hot chocolate sauce are all they can expect in the present state of the market.

P. S. No. 2. Dick also says I'm a fool to try to patch things up; that there is too much "edge" on this ever to mend. But Billy is a dear and does not mind being exchanged one bit, although he says, "Who ever heard of exchanging anything that is only sent on approval?"

POLLY.

MISS PAULINE WESTCOTE TO MISS
HELEN MORRIS

JULY 6.

MY DEAR:

Me and Carnegie are a great success at "Peace Parties." "They came, they saw," they called each other liars and went away again and I'm just alive; but I'll tell you the whole sad tale in order. "Here beginneth the first lesson":

As the Mater and Bess were away, and I had all those extra rooms, I asked the men to spend the night, and I drove them down to meet Carew, for I wanted to have a serious talk with him.

Well—I bullied him into saying he would apologize to Doris "for living," and I thought that was doing pretty well considering how awfully "sot" old bachelors get at his age; but my dear, when he went up to speak to Doris she gave him an icy stare and two fingers. He, of course, was furious, and then my troubles began. The atmosphere upstairs was cold enough to shake icicles out of your dress, but

downstairs it was hot as—well, you can imagine.

The cook was on a rampage and the cream would not freeze (things are never evenly distributed in this world). It took some time to pacify her, but we got in to dinner at last, and then—You know those dear little finger-puffs I bought the last day you and I were in town together? They were awfully expensive, but I thought stocks were going up. Well, I pinned them on one side of my head before dinner, and they really did look terribly smart, but—I forgot to put in more than one hairpin and in the middle of dinner I got too emphatic over something I was saying and in shaking my head violently something fell down. Like a stupid, I did not realize what it was and began to look on the floor to see what I had lost; then what did our new idiot of a maid do but start grubbing, too. Suddenly she said triumphantly, "Here it is, Miss Pauline," and held up—all my pretty hair!

I could not help it—I just burst out laughing. I wanted to quote something clever to meet the occasion, but all I could think of was:

"I'd rather have fingers than toes,
I'd rather have eyes than a nose;
And as for my hair, I'm glad it's all there—
I'll be awfully sad when it goes."

Fortunately, as well as unfortunately, Carew Carter was the only one who saw it and I think he was a bit shocked; but if he does not know by this time that women don't grow little curls like fat bologna sausages on their heads naturally, it's time he learned.

The rest of the evening we stuck in couples and talked to each other like mad, so that no one should be tempted to make general conversation, and that night I scolded Doris until she promised to make up the next morning if I left them alone together.

I took Billy down to the station first and walked the horses the entire way to give Doris plenty of time (I felt like the man with the fox, the goose and the corn). When I got back I looked all over the grounds but could not

find the "Peace Party," and they were nowhere to be seen in the house, so finally I ran up to Doris's room, and there she was packing away as hard as she could, slamming slippers, soap and dresses in one irate heap in her trunk.

"There is no fool like an old fool," she said angrily, slamming the last thing down as I came in. "I wish you would take Carew Carter and work him for all you can."

Do you blame me if I do after that?

Devotedly,

POLLY.

P. S. I forgot to say that Mrs. Jack was ill and did not come.

MISS PAULINE WESTCOTE TO MISS HELEN MORRIS

WILLOWOOD, L. I., JULY 27.

HELEN LOVE:

Can't you meet me at the Club Sunday and have tea with Carew and me? I'll get another man and we'll have a jolly time.

Do come, that's a dear, or I can't go; people are beginning to talk so about us I really feel uncomfortable. Besides, to be frank, I've had an "overdose," so help me out and get there at five surely.

Devotedly,

POLLY.

P. S. I want you to meet Carew; I'm sure you'll like him, and I've told him so much about you.

CAREW CARTER TO MISS HELEN MORRIS
HAZELMERE HUNT CLUB, L. I.,

AUGUST 7.

MY DEAR MISS MORRIS:

You certainly are a dream in that red hat. Please wear it next week and dine with me at the Club, and I'll hunt up a chaperon who is cross-eyed and deaf in the high ear.

I hear Mrs. Jack Westlake is back from Europe (this is not apropos of the before-mentioned chaperon). Would you come if I got her? and another man—then we could have some bridge after dinner.

No, I have not seen Miss Westcote lately—I have been so busy and there always seems so much doing at the

Club around this time, that I have not had the time to run in.

I saw her married sister, though, last Sunday, Mrs. Jack Deming. It seems Jack was pretty well shaken up, or rather down, by the market, but Grace was dressed superbly. "Flying off somewhere in your auto, I suppose?" I asked Jack.

"Sold," Jack said laconically. "I'm busted."

"Busted!" I said. "Nonsense, man; why, look at Grace—she dresses like a Pittsburg princess."

"Oh!" Billy said disgustedly, "my dear man, don't you realize that we are some of the 'nouveaux poor.' Grace can't afford to wear anything but her best clothes now."

Please set your own day, or rather night; only come, and believe me,

Very sincerely yours,

CAREW CARTER.

MISS PAULINE WESTCOTE TO MISS HELEN MORRIS

AUGUST 12.

MY DEAR HELEN:

It is very good of you to ask me to lunch at the Club with you and Billy and Mr. Carter, but I'm sorry to say that I shall not be home this week.

My latest suitor, who is young and very good-looking, is giving a week-end at his camp. He invited me weeks ago, but I waited to see if the girl through whom I met him was invited too, as I believe in the Golden Rule among friends.

Hoping that you will have a pleasant time, I remain,

Affectionately yours,

PAULINE WESTCOTE.

P. S. I wonder if you know that Carew Carter was an old beau of Mrs. Jack's; after all, though, she is only one of many.

MISS DORIS KANE TO MISS HELEN MORRIS

AUGUST 19.

MY DEAR HELEN:

I hear through Billy that you have cut Polly out in Carew Carter's affections. Between you and me, I'm glad.

Polly is a dear girl, but she is inclined to be a bit hypocritical about things; she knows what she wants all the time, but she likes to have you think when she gets it that fate has just dropped it in her mouth accidentally.

Have you heard Mrs. Jack's three rules for catching the untamed old bachelor?

1st: Don't be skeptical—swallow all men say to you with a sweet smile, even if it gives you indigestion afterward—it makes them feel clever and does not hurt you.

2d: Don't be cynical, because then they know that you know what they know, and they like to know it all.

3d: Don't get frivolous at the wrong moment. Men like to be taken seriously when he is joking.

Carry out these rules and at the end of a year you'll surely have "something, oh, Lord," and we'll hope it will be a man.

I thought they might amuse you; why don't you apply them?

Always affectionately yours,

DORIS.

P. S. Latin quotations are so puzzling. Billy has been teasing me ever since he asked me last week in what position Carew Carter stood to you. I meant to say "*Persona non grata*," but you know how those things all sound alike, so I said cheerfully, "Oh, he is a *sine qua non*."

Dick looked puzzled for a minute; then he burst out laughing. "Are you sure," he said, "you don't mean a *nunc dimittis*?"

Now what does he mean by that, do you know?

DORIS.

MRS. JACK WESTLAKE TO MRS. BOB FULTON

WILLOWOOD, L. I., SEPTEMBER 1.

DEAR EDITH:

Who do you think I saw at the Club the other day, for the first time in years—well, at least since before I was married, and he fancied himself violently in love with me—Carew Carter!

I knew by the part in his hair and the

crease in his trousers, that he was out for conquest; poor dear, he is getting old—and so am I.

Somehow, I went back in memory to those childhood days before we ever really met. Do you remember how he and I used to hate each other?

I used to call him "the horrid Carter boy," and you told me he said I was freckled and had a pug nose. Then you gave that party with real ice cream and pink cakes and we both went and everyone played games together.

That day he did not seem half so horrid, and he always let me catch him when we played blind-man's-buff and Dixie Land, and we ended by sitting on the same chair and alternately licking the same "all-day sucker."

How long ago it seems! He is running around now after Helen Morris; she is a sentimental little minx, and though she does not care for him a bit, she keeps him jumping. Last night I found him shivering on the piazza gazing at the moon with her, and this morning he had an awful cold in consequence—poor man.

The girls here have no conscience and have completely turned his silly old head. You see, though they have never any of them taken him really seriously, they have been very serious about fighting over him. It is the old story of the crows and the carcass—each one wants all the pickings, and he, poor dear, is too stupid to know he is being picked.

His chronic state is falling in and out of love with every pretty girl he meets. Doris was a bridge and tennis fiend, and he played both furiously with her.

Polly was the Shaw type, heartless and hypocritical, laughed at him to his

face and left him with the golf and red necktie habit. Helen makes him moon-gaze and wear purple socks, and so it goes on like an endless chain.

He is getting selfish now and has more money than is good for him. What he really needs is a woman of the world, who will take him in hand, and, above all, break up the kindergarten habit.

For the sake of "Auld Lang Syne" I'd like to see him saved. I believe he is really worth while if you scrape off the coating, and if no one else will do it, why, "it might as well be I."

Lovingly yours,

MADGE WESTLAKE.

MISS PAULINE WESTCOTE to MISS HELEN MORRIS

WILLOWOOD, L. I., SEPTEMBER 5.

DEAREST HELEN:

I enclose you the account of Doris and Billy's wedding announcement. Billy, who says things sent on approval can't be exchanged!

I hear Mrs. Jack is giving Carew Carter a tremendous rush. I wish her success in the salting-down process; he has his good points, and if she catches him (mark the "if") we'll dance our shoes out at the wedding. Dick says if Mrs. Jack is wise she'll trot him around to the Little Church Around the Corner and get it over quickly, for if she waits too long he'll fall in love with one of the bridesmaids.

See you Tuesday, honey, and I'm so glad Doris has asked you to be bridesmaid, too.

Always devotedly,

POLLY.



OFTEN THE CASE

BUFFINGTON—I can trace my ancestry back for eleven generations.

GRIMSHAW—Yes, and isn't it sad to think how a great family is bound to peter out sooner or later?

THE FRIEND

By Lindsay Bashford

AN afternoon's conversation, in serene sunshine, brought a revolution in three lives. The old Marquis de Valmond realized that he was growing old. That was the tragedy of the occasion. Lady Ogilvie found a young and handsome husband. Young Eric Barrington, fresh from parades in the Life Guards at Whitehall, found a very winsome and somewhat whimsical wife. These two provided the comedy of the crisis. As with all comedy, on the stage and elsewhere, there were moments very close to tears.

The southern extremity of the Isle of Man tapers to a point. Here is Port Erin, with the most bewitching cove for bathing. By road to Port Saint Mary is perhaps two miles, but to follow the coast-line is many times longer. An irregular peninsula juts out. Desolate moors end abruptly in high cliffs which descend to a racing tide. At one point of the coast the tide tears madly at a hundred yards' breadth between the Isle of Man and the little rocky islet of the Calf. At another the cliffs form themselves majestically into a mighty headland. It is called Spanish Head because, one foggy night, a galleon of the Armada, making for home round the north of Scotland, ran aground and was wrecked.

There were survivors—one realized that when one saw Lady Ogilvie, with her dark eyes and straight eyebrows, her grace of movement and passion of gesture under excitement. The Spanish blood was in her family. Her father had been a country lawyer at Peel when Sir Giles Ogilvie had arrived to close a distinguished public career in com-

parative leisure as Governor of the Isle of Man.

A question of property arose in which the House of Keys at Castletown—the ancient deliberative assembly of the island—stood at variance with the somewhat autocratic governor. The despotism of an Indian province had accentuated dictatorial tendencies, and he was over sixty, with an uncertain liver. The insinuating Peel solicitor was introduced as arbitrator in the dispute. His daughter, eighteen-year-old Elsie Latta, was introduced into Castletown society. Within a fortnight inflammable old Sir Giles had proposed. Within twenty-four hours after his proposal she had accepted him. She hardly knew why she did so, except that the entire island, from Ramsey to Port Erin, would expect her to jump at so good an opportunity of being finally settled in life. Sir Giles behaved admirably, although not without a humorous eccentricity. He celebrated her Armada blood by purchasing the Spanish Head and a square mile of desolate moorland above it. In the middle of his purchase he built a very ugly but exceedingly comfortable stone house. After two years of irritation and boredom for his young wife he died of apoplexy, incurred by reading a review article on India with the conclusions of which he disagreed. Lady Ogilvie inherited the Spanish Head property and a handsome investment in Consols.

Ten years afterward we arrive at this momentous afternoon.

Lady Ogilvie, twenty-eight and at the apotheosis of gentle beauty, sat in a long chair beneath a chestnut-tree. A

book lay unregarded on her knee. She gazed out over the edge of the cliff, toward the sea. There was no wind. There were no clouds. The water was dazzling in sunshine and incredibly tranquil.

To her, striding across the grass came young Eric Barrington, having ridden up from the inn at Port Saint Mary. Her eyes greeted him, full of love. But he was grave. He stood before her, a graceful, vigorous, boyish figure, and began abruptly:

"It must be done. There's no way out of it. You must tell the dear old marquis."

She paled.

"I must tell him?"

"Today!" cried the young man.

"I can't," Her voice quivered.

"It would hurt him so."

The boyish voice said tenderly, "My dearest, it's a question of duty."

"To hurt him?" she queried.

"Eventually," said he. "Sooner or later, it must be given out."

She threw out delicate hands in despair.

"I've tried often enough. The words fail me. I haven't the courage."

"It becomes," answered he, "more difficult the longer it is postponed."

She smiled ruefully. He knelt beside her and she stroked his bright hair.

"Let me await the real opportunity. Perhaps it is close. When I see your eyes shine. . . ."

His voice thrilled. "I can't help looking at you."

He suddenly leaned forward to kiss her, but she bent laughingly away.

"Don't be extravagant," murmured she.

Young Barrington sprang to his feet.

"The suspense! The constant waiting! When I can see nothing, think of nothing but you! To see you every morning and every afternoon, and always at sunset to be coolly dismissed! Ah! if you realized what I feel! If you knew how my whole being, all I am and ever can be, is yours. . . ."

He paused and lugubriously added:

"And, day after day, hesitation, doubt, delay. . . . And all because

you don't want to hurt the feelings of a gray-haired old Royalist exile with nothing but a few vineyards on the Dordogne, a French facility in epigram, and old enough to be your father. What right has he to influence you?"

She brooded and pensively queried too: "What right?"

"He is only a friend," cried young Barrington, "nothing more."

A gentle color crept to her cheek.

"But such a friend," murmured she softly.

"Every day at sunset," burst out the preposterous lover, "I am packed off and he arrives. I meet him regularly on the road. What claim has he?"

Lady Ogilvie rose, and, taking her lover's arm, walked with him up and down on the smooth grass.

"Listen patiently," said she, and began, with emotion, her narrative.

"After my husband's death I was very lonely. I was an only child and had always led a very secluded life. I left the island and traveled for some months. At St. Moritz, in the Engadine, I met the Marquis de Valmond. Friendship was never easy to me, but in the depth of desolation I became friends with him. He it was who first brought back to me my lost joy in life. He it was who made me smile once more and look forward hopefully into the future. I owe him the resuscitation of my whole self . . . there, up among the mountains. I descended by Maloja to the Italian lakes to pass the Autumn at Bellaggio. He came with me, and it was there he began to come and see me daily at sunset, to dine with me, to walk up and down with me in the cool night and lavish upon me all his accumulated stores of philosophy and wit and scholarship. He has no ties in his own country. I am his only friend. Thus it happened that when I finally returned to the Isle of Man and settled down here on the estate my husband left me, the marquis followed. He bought a little fisher-cottage in Port Saint Mary. And every evening at sundown—at about this hour—he comes up the hill to my great, lonely house and talks to me.

Ah, Eric," she concluded, with a wistful and delicious smile in his handsome eyes, "I owe my old friend more than a woman can owe to any man except her husband."

Young Barrington, at her avowal, cried impatiently:

"Has he ever spoken of love? We know what these old men are!"

She colored delicately. "Never. We are too good friends. And now," she added in delicate malice, "I have to tell him that you have stepped audaciously between us. Won't he raise his eyebrows and shrug his shoulders, and cry, 'That unintellectual Adonis! To marry you!' And I shall candidly reply that I have no idea what I saw in you."

"I'm no genius," said Barrington sulkily. "I don't pretend to be. I'm just an ordinary fellow."

She patted his arm.

"I shall be obliged to acknowledge that he reads little and thinks less."

"I'm not one of your damned philosophers," responded he. "But I hope I'm a gentleman."

"That poetry is above him and epigram beyond," her catalogue serenely continued.

"Oh!" he cried, "if you propose to make invidious comparisons—!"

"That he does not sing . . ."

"I? No, of course not. What a ridiculous idea!"

"That he thinks Shakespeare dull and Milton impossible . . ."

"Go on!" The youthful voice was very indignant.

"Has never even heard of Musset . . ."

"Well?"

"But that, in spite of all his shortcomings, perhaps because of them, because he is handsome, because he is young, because he is honorable, because . . . because I am a woman and he loves me, therefore I love him; therefore, despite chaos, through torment and tornadoes, in rain and shine I shall be his. Now kiss me!"

He did so. He caught sight of a venerable and stately figure in the distance. He cried, "Here he is! Tell

him all that. He's human enough to understand. Tell him."

He disappeared.

Lady Ogilvie turned to greet her friend with a somewhat plaintive little smile. An impressive figure was the marquis, tall and graceful, with a certain delicate stateliness in his bearing that harmonized well with his finely cut features. The experienced observer might have looked at him with a certain pity as the representative of a type fast becoming obsolete in a less leisurely generation. For such a man the enjoyment of life was a science and a complete career. Benevolence and wit mingled genially in his eyes.

He took her hand and kissed it. In their old habit they began to pace to-and-fro. And, after a moment, almost as if continuing his own meditations, or their conversation of the previous evening, the marquis began to speak:

"The turning of the leaves signaled the approach of Autumn," said he, in whimsical regret. "With Autumn—horrible thought—comes old age!"

She blandly remonstrated. "You are still young in everything but mere trivial years."

"When a man," he continued in his fine old voice, "can no longer turn a woman's head, when he puts on spectacles to read his newspaper, when there comes twinges of rheumatism . . . then he is no longer young!"

With a charming gesture she drew from her silken reticule a miniature mirror and held it before him.

"See," she cried, "how young you are!"

He positively sighed. "I am getting old. I feel it. I know it."

She trembled, clenched her hands, paled, controlled her voice to indifference and began:

"I have something to say to you, dear marquis!"

Her tone brought him to a halt. "Well? Is it any trouble in which I can be of use? If so, command me!"

"No, I . . ." She paused. She looked at him, at his dear, gracious eyes. Her courage failed her. "It is nothing. Let us talk as we used to."

His keen glance remained unsatisfied.

"My dear," said he, "when great issues are abroad, philosophy and epigrams avail nothing. What is it?"

"Nothing—really nothing!" Her distress was pitiful.

He grasped her hands.

"Oh, but there is something," cried he. "My dearest friend is in trouble. I have the right to know precisely what that trouble is."

Now she was desperate. It had to be, it had to be. She tore her hands away. She stood before him, absolutely pale, quivering all over. "I must tell you," she murmured. "I am in love."

There was a long silence. With concentrated eagerness she had watched his face. All the signs of emotion she had perceived appeared in a swift quiver of his lips. But in his voice, when at last he spoke, tragedy sang.

"Ah . . . you love—some younger man!"

Tears came to her eyes.

"You know Captain Barrington."

"I know him." The mellow voice was harder now.

"I love him," cried she, "with all my heart!"

And he, in sudden passion, responded bitterly: "So you are only a woman after all!"

Again for an interminable interval silence fell. When the marquis spoke his voice, quite cold and restrained, seemed to cut the air like a sharp sword.

"I thought I knew the human heart, I thought the bond between us would be permanent and all-sufficing. I see now the value of intellectual friendship, such as ours, in comparison with mere animal qualities of youth and beauty. What could I, with all my experience and knowledge and wit and devotion—what could I accomplish in comparison with the breath of youth and slender manhood of that preposterous youngster? God, what a fool I have been, what a fool I have been!"

"My friend," she pitifully interposed, "our friendship is not over!"

He swept upon her fiercely. "It is. I loved you."

She fell back, white as paper.

"You . . . loved . . . me! You never hinted that!"

"I could not," he responded simply. "I was bound."

"But your wife is dead? You told me so!" Her eyes sought his in wonder.

"She is not dead," was the response.

With painful agitation he continued:

"I beg your forgiveness. I lied to you because I sought the bond of friendship I could not gain had you fancied half my affection directed elsewhere. She is not dead. She left me for her lover. Now you have my innermost heart. Time and again . . . at countless moments . . . the expression of my love for you was on my lips. I held back for your sake and for my honor. All I could hope for, all I could achieve, was perfect friendship. And now"—he threw out his arms in passionate despair—"that, too, is gone. You love that boy."

He turned away with a strangled sob.

"Well . . . the old fellow must give way. Now I realize that I am old. I am deposed. I go once more into exile, from a far sweeter sovereign. Good-bye." With bent head he moved slowly away.

"I am old and superfluous," she heard him sadly murmur. He disappeared behind rhododendrons and she had not the heart to call him back.

The sun had set. Already the first waves of coming darkness swept the air like silent shadows. The shrill sound of the tide that raced between the Head and the rock islet of the Calf seemed suddenly to die away. The distant heather that in the daytime had been so purple lost its color. Stealthy grayness settled over everything. The bright flowers—geraniums and calceolarias and irises—she had chosen for her own garden seemed to droop. Loneliness inexpressible seized her and her heart cried sorrowfully:

"A shadow has fallen already over my dream of happiness!"

Across the lawn with eager steps came Eric Barrington. "Well?"

She smiled again.

"I've told him, Eric . . . listen! I am too fond of him to let him go. He must stay. He must continue to come up at sunset and talk to me. I can't do without it and he can't either. He must remain our friend."

"Impossible!" cried the lover, frowning. "I must have you all to myself. I won't share you with any man. The idea's absurd. He has enough worldly wisdom to see how impracticable such an arrangement would be."

She stooped to gather some radiant blossoms, and while arranging them in the bosom of her dress murmured mischievously: "You are jealous, my friend."

"What if I am?" was the vehement response. "What is love without a background of jealousy?"

At this she was up in arms. "Take care!" cried she.

He disregarded the warning. He would not notice the sudden flushing of her delicate cheek and the flash of her eyes. He hurried on wildly:

"I don't trust him. He's not so superannuated as all that. I decline to accept him as part and parcel of your establishment."

"You don't trust him? Then you don't trust me. Good," cried she. "Then we part!"

She swept like a whirlwind down the path and vanished into the house.

For a moment he stared blankly after her. He did not comprehend her action. Then it became clear to his mind that she had left him. His jaw set in determination, while tears sprang unwillingly to his eyes. He walked rapidly toward the house.

In her gold-and-pink boudoir he found her playing a polonaise of Chopin very desperately. Even before his appearance her resolution collapsed. Entering he heard a violent discord and found her head down on the keyboard, while her shoulders heaved with passionate sobbing. In a moment he was on his knees by her side. His arms encircled her waist. His penitent voice cried:

"My darling! I yield! Forgive me!"

As she smiled forgiveness on him the Marquis de Valmond entered quietly. He winced at the sight of their affectionate attitude, but instantly controlled himself. There was nothing in his bearing but gentle deference and courtesy as he came forward, hand outstretched.

"I come to apologize for my passion," he said quietly, "and take my leave more decorously."

Young Barrington in his new and softer mood sprang to his feet, crying:

"You must not go!"

"My dear young friend," said the marquis in gentle irony, "you are precisely the one who should encourage my departure."

Lady Ogilvie, drying her tears, set herself to explain. "We want you to stay. See . . ." She moved toward the fireplace and placed his capacious arm-chair in the chimney-corner. "This is your place, only yours. No one else shall have the right to occupy it. It is only for you. And every evening, just as usual, you shall come. We shall be three instead of two, that is all. Agree." Her hands came up in dainty pleading.

"I beg you to stay," added Barrington, not, however, without some effort. The marquis gazed at him quizzically:

"You are not jealous?" he inquired.

"Not a bit," was the reply, given with admirable emphasis.

An inimitable whimsical, rueful expression crept into the eyes of the delightful old marquis, despite his obvious emotion.

"Now I know for very truth that I am old," cried he, "since young lovers are no longer jealous of me."

They watched him for some moments in silence as he paced thoughtfully up and down, a wonderful figure, redolent of past days, wherein the gradations of human intercourse were finer and the minds of men, like their manners, more ceremonious and more refined. At last he came to a pause before the young soldier. He tapped him on the shoulder. He smiled at him, kindly, with a touch of regret and melancholy.

"Yes," said he, "it has been the old, old tragedy for me this afternoon. I had deluded myself into thinking I could avoid it, that the vigor of the mind might compensate for the stiffness of the joints. I was wrong. You are not jealous of me because you are young and I am old. You are right. And now . . . as a harmless old fellow . . . am I to stay?"

She came to him, rose on tiptoe and kissed him on both cheeks. "Oh, stay," whispered she.

Unresisting, he was led by the young couple to the chair in the

chimney-corner. He sat down, and sitting there he joined their hands.

"God bless you both," he said with quaint solemnity. "I will be your good friend. Now go and make love. Leave me to concoct my epigrams for this evening's conversation."

Yet when they had gone he concocted no epigrams. He sat there staring into the empty fireplace, tears streaming silently down his cheeks. His thought was on the sacrifice of friendship. His heart was broken, yet, throughout the future, he must smile just as cheerfully.



MR. TONGUE

By Edmund Vance Cooke

YOU forward fellow, Mr. Tongue!
 I met my friend, and out you flung
 With "Glad to see," and "How d'ye do?"
 Although he bowed to me, not you.
 If I would eat or drink, you haste
 To claim the first and freshest taste;
 And when my doctor visits me,
 Why, out you pop for him to see!

How hard for you to curb your will
 And learn the lesson, "Peace, be still!"
 How eager seems the boast to slip
 From your too-active, agile tip;
 How easy for the hasty phrase
 To rasp and rankle, then, for days;
 Few heads were hurt, few hearts were wrung,
 If you but rested, Mr. Tongue.

Oh, Mr. Tongue, perhaps no song
 Of yours will bear the world along;
 You may not know the thunder speech
 Into all human hearts to reach,
 But yours may be the whispered word
 Both gentle breathed and gently heard,
 And then you may be blest among
 Your fellows, O ambitious Tongue!

THE LEE SHORE

By Guy Bolton

IT was strange that all day he should have thought of her. Not for years had she been more than a memory—vagrant, lingeringly bitter-sweet. It was years even since her presence—that like a spirit had haunted him so often—like a spirit was laid. And then in the midst of a particularly busy day, while he was turning in his mind a question of some moment, her face had risen before him vividly, recurrently.

But perhaps it was that very problem which, instead of shutting out the conflicting influence, invited it, for Richard Marsh was hesitating on a step which meant much—much of material gain, much of moral loss; and each time some memory of her had flitted with a seemingly perverse incontinence across his mind, he had paused to wonder what *she* would say if she knew.

He could have little doubt of what she would say. Though their intimacy had been so short-lived it had sounded all of the many chords to which they were mutually attuned. They understood each other in a world that neither had found sympathetic. They were compatriots of temperament meeting in exile, and each shared conviction was an article of faith to bind them closer in a common creed.

How far he had fallen from the grace of their beliefs Richard Marsh might have measured by his mere consideration of this soiling transaction. It marked yet another step in his deterioration. Two years ago he would have shuddered at the idea; five he would have laughed at it.

And her face, that he so often longed to forget, came back and made him re-

member—remember other things that were slipping down into the creeping tide: youth and hope and belief. He threw his arm across the desk and rested his head upon it for a moment. What was the use? There were no ultimates in life. Ideals led either to the disappointment of failure or the far keener disappointment of success. What was the use?

He had met her years ago at a little fishing village on the Maine coast where they were both spending the Summer. Their acquaintance had been of the briefest, their friendship, carried on by a scattering flight of letters, had lasted somewhat longer; while their love—his love at least—had survived through the years.

It was on a morning early in October—any of the East-coast folk could supply the year and date, for it was the morning of the great gale. All night the storm had raged and the dawn broke wild and gray, with the wind driving sheets of rain against the sodden earth and the cobbled gutter of the steep-set street roaring like a waterfall.

The glimpse of the sea, visible through the drawn skein of the storm, gave promise of a fine spectacle for any who would venture out; and Richard, clad in fisherman's oilskins and high boots, set his face against the gale, picking his way down the slippery rocks to the beach while the roar of the surf grew louder every moment in his ears.

He paused at the head of the steps as a furious gust snatched his breath from him, hesitating as to whether he should go on. He often thought of that in after years—if only he had not

gone on, how different his whole life would have been; what a placid, eventless course he might have steered!

And then, looking down, he noticed someone just below him pressed back under the shelter of the rocky cliff, gazing out across the wilderness of leaping, driving water. A second glance and he felt a thrill—but a thrill less of surprise than one vaguely premonitory: It was a girl.

Richard descended the steps, drawn, strangely quiescent, by a feeling stranger still—an almost unconscious conviction that this scene was familiar, the stage-setting of a predestined experience.

The sou'wester was pulled down over her eyes, but a lock or two of heavy black hair had escaped from it and was blown flat against a cheek showing, even under the sting of the wind, a miraculous transparent whiteness. There was indeed a rather wild quality in her beauty that seemed singularly appropriate to the scene. She might have been a nymph borne ashore by the gale, her slim figure hidden beneath the cloak of some poor fisher-lad she had lured to his destruction.

Three feet away Richard had to raise his voice to be heard. His smile gleamed and he swept a hand toward the sea.

"Isn't it magnificent?"

She turned, meeting his gaze quite frankly, and he noticed her eyes were of that rare crystalline quality which, like the sea, seems to reflect a color in harmony with its surroundings. Now like the sea they were green with a fleck of white, clear as foam, in the slightly raised corners.

It was all the more uncanny that his words did not, seemingly, reach her. Her brow slightly drawn, the corners of her mouth drooped.

"Have they any chance?" she said.

Richard followed vaguely the direction of her gaze. Not fifty feet before them the waves were shattering their hissing, high-raised crests against the long black reef that drew its head up on the beach; its cruel jagged vertebrae stretching away, covert, treacherous,

to the thin pencil of the Gray Shoals Light.

Beyond that presumptuous human defiance, barely discernible through the clouds of spindrift and the recurring sweep of the rain, was a ship, a two-masted schooner; heeled over till her deck, with every incoming breaker pouring over it, looked from where they were standing like the terrace of a waterfall. Close pointed, her drenched sails quivered as though with the fear of a living thing.

"Good God!" Richard muttered, "I hadn't seen that."

The girl was watching his face anxiously.

"Is there no chance?"

He glanced back at the little knot of fishermen huddled in the boat-house door, and shook his head.

"Not much, I'm afraid."

"But it's too awful to think we are just to stand here and watch them drown. If we could only *do* something."

"It's a lee shore and the tide is running in. With this sea there isn't a craft on the coast could reach them."

He drew a step closer to her and they stood thus, side by side, watching while the long minutes dragged by and the little vessel, with a nerve-torturing rhythm, sank from sight in the trough and struggled high up on the crest.

She was making a gallant fight and slowly—so slowly as occasionally to deceive the watchers—she was losing it. The storm was driving her against the fangs of its pitiless ally, and as this certainty grew in their minds the man and the girl, with a low-breathed question and assent, turned and moved over to the boat-house.

There were half-a-dozen men and a few children gathered in the porch—the rapt silence of the little ones giving to the scene the most solemn touch of all. Not a soul of the group, though they had been there for hours, shifted their gaze as Richard and the girl joined them.

"Do you think they could get in with the dingy?" Richard asked after a moment.

"No chance in God's world!" It was an old man that spoke, Peter Harley, bowed and weather-beaten; his faded blue eyes peering out across the reef; his knotted old hands working nervously, like a blind creature groping its way.

"She's a trawler, isn't she?"

"Yes, the *Martha M.*, young Jim More's."

"What! he lives here?"

"That's one of his chillen right there," the old man responded. "Only she don't know it's her dad, pore little bit. Be careful, don't speak the name. There ain't no use in Martha knowin'—yet."

A little boy stole over to them.

"Hullo, Miss Katherine," he said, addressing Richard's companion. She slipped her arm about him and stooped down.

"Bring little Janey More over here, won't you?"

Then she seated herself on the bench, and throwing back the oilskins took the little girl in her arms.

The child was not more than five, but she was born of those who for generations had gone down to the sea in ships, entrusting their lives day by day to the ever-changing moods of its treacherous surface, confronting open-eyed that yet greater mystery of which it is the fitting symbol. And so it seemed that there lurked in the wide, innocent eyes some half-instinctive understanding of what it was that hushed the voices of those about her and froze to wanness the accustomed smile.

Miss Katherine pressed the little creature close against her breast to hide, perhaps, her own unchecked tears, and Richard, looking down at them, was strangely moved. Grief and pity, natural emotions springing from the fountains of being, swept aside the horror which had been the first feeling inspired by this sudden meeting with one of the great primal crises of existence.

He stooped down and whispered tenderly:

"Won't you let me take her home?"

And you—there is no use in your staying on."

She shook her head, meeting his anxious gaze with a grateful smile.

"No, I couldn't leave now."

The child reached a hand sleepily up, grasping his lapel, and in almost unconscious response he stooped and kissed her. He could feel the girl's warm breath on his neck. He could almost hear the beating of her heart in the bosom that rose and fell so close to his cheek. He closed his eyes while a strange, immeasurable happiness surged over him. He forgot the boat and its peril, forgot his surroundings. He was one of the sacred trinity—man, woman and child. As he straightened himself the miracle which in that moment had happened shone from his eyes.

And then, gazing back across the water, he saw that in that moment something else had happened. The boat was no longer pointed into the gale. It was flying before it, crushed and broken, struggling in a tangle of rigging like a frenzied fish in a seine. But no one was looking at the ship; all eyes were riveted on a dark speck tossing between the mountainous breakers. It rose and fell, rose and fell. Then a great wave engulfed it and for a full minute everyone held his breath. But it reappeared, tossed skyward like a child's ball. Then once again it rose and fell, rose and fell, rose—their anxious hearts could almost deceive their straining vision. It had risen before, surely now—?

But the tumultuous green waste showed no sign of the burden it had borne so treacherously. Nothing but heaving water and low-hung, swift-driving scud.

Richard turned and lifted the child in his arms.

"Come," he said, "we will take her home." And he drew the hand that Katherine had laid caressingly on his burden under his arm, and without further word they went together up the path.

It was strange that all day he should have thought of her. Not for years

had she been more than a memory; yet throughout the busy hours her presence had clung to him, tenacious, compelling, and now at home she was still with him by his study hearth in the firelight.

He had gone once more over the old, familiar round, dwelling fondly on the picture of that first meeting, shrinking when his thought touched the wound that, unhealed, was ever throbbing back of his consciousness.

How he cherished the memory of those few gray days that had flitted by like ghosts of the pageant Summer! A deserted beach; storm-shuttered cottages; and the boats hauled back from the reach of the boldest wave. The social tocsin had summoned their kind back to the cities, but these two lingered on, drawn together by what they had witnessed—this great and awful thing so apart from their screened existence.

Yet dwell as he might on those brief, precious hours, Richard Marsh could not tell their sum without coming to the end—the struggle when he had fought her conscience and his own, the weight of her given word against the happiness of both; for though she had fought her battle, too, he had wrung from her the admission that she loved him.

And it was so that they had made their mistake—the fine idealism of youth, a too sensitive honor, and the very sublimity of their love keyed them to the point of sacrifice.

Then had come his first meeting with Henry.

"I want you to be friends," she said, as their hands met and the man who was robbing him laughed his jovial, full-fed laugh and swore they were friends already.

"Katherine's pals are my pals—we shall want to see a lot of you when we're married."

His voice had had time to grow familiar in the lapse of years, but the tone still came to Richard, awaking his distaste as clearly as if freshly spoken.

He shrugged his shoulders impatiently, as though he would shake off the

long-lingering impression, and rising from his chair by the fire he took up again the paper which awaited only his signature to make it a powerful weapon—insidious, deadly, in the hands of a ruthless coterie.

Richard hesitated, his fingers on the cover of the ink-well. He, too, was on a lee shore—he had been fighting a long time and slowly, inch by inch, losing the fight. He had done rather well at first. There had been temptations resisted, but that was long past. And after all was it worth while—had it made him happier?

A fresh current of air swung ajar the door, rustling the papers on the desk and drawing a dart of flame from the dying embers. Richard Marsh faced about, his head thrown back, filling his lungs deeply; for there had come to him, unmistakable in the moment of passing, the pungent odor of salt marshes.

And that she was borne to him on that breath of the ocean did not surprise him. Her presence had been so real to his other senses, that for the veil to be at last lifted from his eyes seemed but natural. He had indeed a strange conviction that he had been expecting this to happen.

Yet he did not approach or for the moment address her, but sank to his knees upon the hearth-rug, then dropped back against his chair; looking up, weaving her presence into a glorious make-believe.

"Katherine!"

"Richard!" The word came faint and clear as the echo of his own. Perhaps the yearning tone was an echo also.

"Richard, I've come to help you. Something is wrong."

"Beloved," he breathed, "your coming helps me. Only your failure to come is wrong."

"You want me always, Richard, but tonight you need me."

His voice sank to the faintest whisper.

"How did you know?"

"I heard you calling me. I heard it above the sound of the surf. The tide

and the wind are setting in together, Richard, and you are on a lee shore."

They were the words he himself had used but a few minutes before. . . . Perhaps . . . But the mystery of it all was stealing into him, mounting to his brain like the incense of forbidden wine. While those fathomless eyes, piercing the shadows that lay between them, burned their way into his very soul, their color, the deep gray-blue of a wintry sea, strangely visible through the dusk.

"Tell me, Richard."

"Tell you? Can you do more than watch?" he asked. "You have your husband, your boy?"

"Yes, I can do more than watch." The low voice grew even lower. "I can cry to you to fight on—because I love you, Richard."

He drew a sharp breath, but remained mute while the silence, intense, absolute, became a tension straining for the cleavage of a word; giving to that word a momentousness that withheld its utterance.

"Richard, you mustn't shipwreck—you are the one strong man to whom I can point my boy. You hold my faith in his future—my faith in everything."

He shook his head, smiling sadly.

"No, I am not a strong man, Katherine. Would to God I were even steadfast in an evil course; better that than to be unstable—a shuffler. The soaring heart and the feet of clay. No, you must never point your boy to me. Do you know that now, at this moment, there is a paper lying on that desk to which I think even Henry—forgive me—would hesitate to put his name. I hesitated tonight, but I was going to sign it tomorrow, at the office, when I had forced myself to forget."

Her brows gathered as at the touch of physical pain. She seemed to be striving to remember and understand the words he had spoken. Then with her eyes still clinging to his upturned gaze, she bent over the desk; her hands groping as though, blind, she should know the unclean thing by its touch.

"This is it?"

He nodded.

She held it out to him. "Burn it." "Burn it?" he repeated. "Will burning it bring gladness into my life? Or can this turning from youth's heroics take from me the happiness I do not possess?"

The emotion in her tense poise, in every delicate contour of her face, pleaded with him.

"Burn it, Richard," she repeated.

But he did not seem to hear her; he was bent forward, listening.

"What is that? Can you hear anything, Katherine?"

"It is the booming of the surf on the reef," she said.

Then on a sudden the panorama of that tragic struggle—that dark vision to which he seemed bound as to the wheel of fate was sweeping him along. There again was the low-hung, driving scud; the hurling tumult of water; the long white line of the reef. And the seal of doom was on all.

It had recurred to him a thousand times, but there was a difference now. He was no longer watching from the shore. He was in a frail boat, swinging between sky and sea in the abyss of eternity. Great mountains, snow-capped, reared themselves far up beside him, sending down crushing avalanches of water upon the staggering vessel; while he, Richard Marsh, clinging to a wrenching tiller-haft, faced death open-eyed.

"Katherine, Katherine," he cried, "I am losing you forever. Not with me, you were mine, and now"—his voice seemed strangling in his throat—"I am slipping away from you, down, down into the very depths."

A long time must have elapsed before he struggled back from that unknown, mystery-haunted void to the pain of consciousness. All around him was dark and still and he lay there, his colder senses striving with the vividness of that last impression; the crushed paper held questioningly above the fire; the momentary glow as, released, it fluttered up in the draft like a spirit at the torment; and then her last words, as she laid her

hand upon his head: "I know now why I came."

He rose unsteadily to his feet.

"Dreams—never more than the evanescent fantasy of a moment," he murmured.

He struck a light. After nine. Perhaps there in that other house she was kissing the children good night, while for him—only dreams.

He hesitated a moment, then walked over to the telephone.

"Yes, one-eight-three-four . . . This is Mr. Marsh . . . Oh, is that you, Henry? . . . I ran across Larkins the other day and he said you'd gone into L. P. R. pretty heavy. I thought I'd better give you the tip to realize now, there's a new deal on . . . Don't mention it, Henry . . . Yes, I am rather a hermit . . . How is Katherine? What, really? I've been dozing, too; only just woke up, but then I'm old enough to be rather bored by my own company. Give her my regards . . . Yes, I'm coming to see how my godchild's grown . . . Good-bye."

He turned away smiling. "Dreams—dreams," but there was a sweetness in the thought now, for perhaps she had shared them. He would make himself believe that she had.

"And it may have been a message, after all," he said, "a beacon-light by which I may steer."

He walked over to the desk. If he waited his mood would have time to change. His matter-of-fact senses might hesitate at the destruction.

He lifted the paper-weight from a pile of documents.

"Funny, it was right on top," he said.

It was not there now. He brought himself round sharply and dropped on his knees before the grate.

The fire was almost out. A few fast-dying embers glowed through the fused cinders above like the fading afterglow of just such a cloud-hung sunset as he had so often watched across the rock-bound waters of his dear East Coast.

At the back of the grate the blackened, feathery ashes of a piece of paper stirred under his breath.



HOW IT WAS

"THE reason, as I conceive it," said the man who habitually thinks along erratic lines, "that Puffington manages to retain his youthful exuberance and uncloyed enthusiasm, despite the passage of years and the flight of time, is that wherever he is and in whatever he participates he imagines the place the middle of the universe and himself the centre of attraction. In a parade he feels that all hats are flying off on his account; when he puts his foot down decisively he thinks the other end of the community flops up in the air; when he sleeps he believes everybody else snores; at a christening he thinks he is the baby; at a wedding he imagines he is the bride; at a funeral he considers himself the corpse; and when he goes down cellar he fancies that the sun has temporarily quit business. Conceit, if consistent and persistent, is a continual well-spring of satisfaction to its possessor."

TOM P. MORGAN.



"I UNDERSTAND he's a firm believer in evolution."

"Well, he frequently makes a monkey of himself."

THE CANDLE AND THE FLAME

By George Sylvester Viereck

THEY hands are like cool herbs that bring
Balm to men's hearts upon them laid;
Thy lovely-petaled lips are made
As any flower of the Spring,
But in thine eyes there is a thing,
O Love, that makes me half afraid.

For they are old, those eyes. They gleam
Between the waking and the dream
With secret wisdom, like a bright
Torch from behind the temple's heavy veil
That beckons to the acolyte
Who prays with trembling lips and pale
In the long watches of the night.

They are old as life. They were
When proud Gomorrah reared its head
A new-born city. They were there
When in the places of the dead
They swathed the body of the Lord.
They gazed on Pa-Wak raise the wall
Of China. They saw Carthage fall,
And grim Attila lead his horde.

There is no secret anywhere
Nor any grief or shame that lies
Not writ somehow in those child eyes
Of thine, O Love, in some strange wise.
Thou art the lad Endymion,
And that great queen with spice and myrrh
From Araby, whom Solomon
Delighted, and the lust of her.

The warriors marching from the sea
With Caesar's cohorts sang of thee,
How thy fair head was more to him
Than all the land of Brittany.
Yea, in the old days, thou wast she
Who lured Mark Antony from home
To death in Egypt, seeing he
Lost love when he lost Rome.

Thou saw'st old Tubal strike the lyre,
Yea, first for thee the poet hurled
Defiance at God's starry choir;
Thou art the romance and the fire,
Thou art the pageant and the strife,
The clamor mounting high and higher
From all the lovers in the world
To all the lords of love and life.

Oft through thine exquisite long lashes
Across the pallor of thy face,
The fire of primal passion flashes
That is as ancient as the race,
But we, that live a little space,
Which, when beholding, feel in it
The horror of the Infinite.

Perhaps the passions of mankind
Are but the torches mystical
Lit by some spirit hand to find
The presence of the Master Mind
That knows the secret of it all
In the great darkness and the wind.

We are the candle, Love the flame
Each separate living light burns out—
Love, being deathless, is the same.
When of life's fever we shall tire
It will desert, and the fire
Rekindle new in prince or lout.

Twin-born of knowledge and of lust
It was before us. It shall be
Indifferent still of thee and me
When shattered is life's golden cup,
When thy young limbs are shriveled up,
And when my heart is turned to dust.

Nay, sweet, smile not, to know at last
That thou or I or knave or fool
Are but the involtient tool
Of some world purpose vague and vast.
No bar to passion's fury set,
With monstrous poppies spice the wine,
For only drunk are we divine,
And only mad shall we forget!



"EHEU!"

By W. Carey Wonderly

AS the narrow green strip called England became submerged, yielding to a misty gray of sky and water, Norcross felt a sudden gripping at his heart, and he set his teeth hard, striving to gain once more complete control of himself. Not that he was sorry to leave England—for he was not—but then neither was he glad to return to his home country, America, and this was the pity of it. For in neither country was there anything to charm or to hold him, and the great voidness in his life stood paramount just now. He wondered dumbly just what he should do.

Presently the stinging wind drove him down to the promenade deck and there he sought a steamer-chair while a steward attempted to make him comfortable with rugs and shawl. And here likewise the emptiness of it all returned to him a thousand-fold. He asked himself again and again why he was going back to America, and going, what he would do when he arrived.

He found himself fast drifting into a state of mental morbidness and this was a thing he most abhorred. It would never do, and he knew it because there was still his daughter, and he secretly felt that some day Edith would need him.

After a little he lighted a cigarette and began to watch disinterestedly the persons on deck. The water was rather rough, the sky gray and heavy, and most of his fellow-passengers had sought the cheerful saloons or the comforts of their own staterooms. The people who passed his chair were few and far between and he was gradually becoming lost in himself again when a

woman approached who struck him most forcibly, possibly because of the quiet sadness of her face. Following her came a steward loaded down with rugs and pillows, who, after a moment's hesitancy, stopped at the chair next to Norcross.

Norcross watched the man as he arranged the rugs and gave her a lot of papers and books. Then when the fellow had gone on down the deck and she made no attempt at reading, he felt a quickening thrill of satisfaction. Her eyes, gray with dark lashes, told of suffering, and this unconscious touch of sympathy between them made him selfishly glad. Others beside himself suffered, some of them silently, others, again, openly, and he was glad that one of these should be this gray-eyed woman next him.

Presently her gaze left the line where sky and sea met, and glancing with unseeing eyes in his direction, she took up a book and began to turn its pages. This she discarded for a magazine and in turn the magazine was put aside in favor of a newspaper. Upon the paper she bestowed at first only a careless glance, then five minutes' study; then again her eyes sought the openness which stretched before her.

And Norcross wondered. In observing this woman he forgot for the time being his own trouble. He asked himself what it was that had brought that look of pain to her eyes, and what she had found in the newspaper to reopen the old wound, causing her very heart to ache.

Fortune favored him. A sudden burst of wind caught the paper from her lap and blew it playfully across the

deck so that it fell face upward directly in front of his chair. He leaned forward to catch it and saw the sensational scare-lines of the first page.

There was a divorce scandal, a bank failure, a suicide, and the notice of the burial of his own son. As the last news-item caught his eye, all else was forgotten—the woman, her sorrow, everything. The old pain returned a hundred-fold, and a mist blurred his vision. His son, his boy, whom he had buried in the English cemetery outside of Cannes!—all else was forgotten, was as if it had never existed. His son! He left his chair and unsteadily sought his cabin, a man old though in his prime, a father who had suffered in his children.

He kept his cabin all day. Time and again he went over the incidents of the last two weeks. His brain ached with the weight of it all, but it was as nothing compared with the emptiness in his heart. He remembered it all so perfectly—too clearly for him ever to forget any of it, he told himself. First had come a cablegram from his son requesting that he send some money—a frightfully large sum of money, he had thought it at the time—to his account at his Paris bankers; then, directly on its heels, had come a second cablegram, and from a stranger, to Norcross, stating boldly that his son had taken his own life. And Norcross had left for Cannes the same day.

For a long while he sat staring at the opposite wall of his stateroom. At last it began to move, the room was revolving, and he knew that he must get out in the open air.

Overhead the sky hung dark and forbidding, and the sea rolled high, so high that in the distance it was almost impossible to tell where sky and water met. But it mattered little to Norcross. He turned up the collar of his Inverness and struck out boldly toward the foremost point of the upper deck.

Here he rested for a moment beside the ship's big bell, his keen eyes piercing the wild, open stretch before him through which the great vessel throbbed its way. It was all as bleak and dreary

and as unpromising as his life appeared to him just now. If before them lay a land of plenty, it was surely a long, long way off.

Presently a flutter of draperies caught his wandering gaze, and looking, he saw a bit of a woman's skirt peeping from behind the other side of the bell. Instinctively he knew that it was she who had sat next to him on the promenade deck that morning. No other woman aboard ship would have braved the wind in coming out to the bell. He took a step forward and a glance at her face told him that he was not mistaken. It was the lady with the sad eyes, and now she was gazing with him hungrily toward the land which lay beyond the mist.

He stopped at the bell's side far into the night, until, in fact, his companion turned away and sought the more cheerful saloons. But she did not linger by the card-parties; rather she went directly to her stateroom, and Norcross was selfishly glad that she did.

In the morning she again sat next him, reading fitfully and at times letting her gaze wander out to sea. In the early evening he found her again at the ship's bell, mysteriously silent, and after a little he ventured a remark.

"It is all so vaguely unpromising," he said quietly. She nodded her head by way of an answer. "Oh, yes, yes!" she cried. Her intonations struck him forcibly. She was not an American woman.

"Are you crossing for the first time?" he asked.

"My first," came the reply.

He hesitated a moment. "I was born there."

"Your home, then?"

"No," he answered, and shook his head, smiling bitterly. She made no reply, and presently Norcross saw her turn away and walk down the deck.

It is perhaps strange that this lone woman, coming into his life as she did, should so thoroughly interest Robert Norcross. Possibly it was because he forgot his own trouble in following hers, again it may be that she, being so utterly alone, attracted him to her.

Enough that he found himself watching for her at every turn, ready to counsel, aid and minister to her every want. That her name was Lily St. John and that she was a widow he learned in the saloon. All else about her was shrouded in mystery.

Had anyone said that Robert Norcross was fast falling in love with this gray-eyed woman about whom he knew nothing, he would have stoutly denied it. And it is highly probable that he would have called their attention to his fast-graying hair and the seven-and-forty years behind him. Also he would have told them that there had been for him but one woman, his wife, now dead these twenty years, and he would have reminded them of the fact that his daughter had been the Princess Sanpitti for three years now. All this, however, did not alter the fact that Norcross had taken more than a passing fancy to Mrs. St. John.

She, on her part, was always glad to see him, frankly glad, and of a morning when he would draw up his chair, or again at nightfall by the big bell, she would listen to him by the hour while he told her bits concerning the country to which she was going and which she had never seen. They had never gotten down to personalities, possibly because in both of them the wound was as yet very new and raw. But Norcross one afternoon mentioned his daughter, and Mrs. St. John, looking mildly interested, had asked her name.

Norcross replied that it was Edith. "She was married to Prince Sanpitti three years ago," he added slowly. "I didn't want her to marry him—an Italian—and now I'm afraid that I was right, after all. Some day—she will need me."

Mrs. St. John bowed her head. "I think I understand," she replied sympathetically.

"She is miserable with him!" he burst out suddenly. "And she won't leave the brute—yet. Yes, it will come to that in time, but now—it's her pride, I think. She is miserable and my money made her so."

"No, her own unreasoning self," corrected the woman beside him, gently.

"If I hadn't the money to give her the fellow would never have come around—" he began.

"You mustn't blame yourself, you shall not," she said firmly. "If the fault is anyone's it is your daughter's. She must have known."

Norcross was silent a moment. He felt her eyes turned upon him, but he sat staring straight ahead, observing nothing as his brain throbbed convulsively.

"My son—" he began after a while.

"Your—son!" she cried, interrupting his sentence. "I didn't know—I thought—I!"

"Yes, my boy—my money has been a curse there too. He—killed himself," he told her, striving to speak calmly.

"I—don't understand," she ventured quietly.

He turned and faced her, and the look of agony in his eyes almost stunned her for a moment. It frightened her to look at him. "My money again," he repeated. "I—their mother died when they were mere babies—my boy and my girl. I suppose there is no need for me to tell you what they were to me. They were everything! And how I planned their futures! They were to be the happiest, most care-free people—but then I was their father. They outgrew their pinafores—Edith her dolls—Robert his kites. And then one day my girl told me about Sanpitti; she was going to be a real princess! I fought desperately. . . . It was no use, and she went away to Italy. Then Robert—he was two years younger, and I still had him. Six months later he went to Paris to play at studio life.

. . . . Two weeks ago I received a letter requesting me to come to Cannes and arrange for my son's burial. He had shot himself—he was only twenty-two. Of course it was a woman, years older than he and world-wise and heartless. She took every cent he could lay his hands on—and left him when he had no more to give her. He cabled me for more money the very

day he—died. But she had left him with another man and—I buried him alone at Cannes."

He ended very quietly and without any cheap pathos or melodrama, but the very look in his eyes chilled the woman's blood. She sat perfectly still, dumbly searching her brain for something to say, and each thing was the wrong thing, pitifully, wofully wrong.

"Money," he told her, after a silence, "money."

She moistened her lips. "It is frightful!" she whispered, leaning slightly forward in her chair. "I don't know what to say to you—Mr. Norcross—"

"Is there anything anyone can say?" he asked. "If it wasn't for Edith I don't know what I should do," he went on. "I know she will need me some day, and I must not fail her."

"Yes, there is still your daughter," she repeated.

"But—"

He broke off abruptly, and the woman, looking, saw his lips tremble. She bowed her head.

There was a little silence, ghastly in its stillness. They sat waiting, the one for the other, their nerves afire, afraid almost of themselves.

Norcross spoke first. "Yes, there is Edith, and I must be always ready, but—God, my boy!"

After this nothing more was said. They sat silently together far into the night. And while they lingered, the wind shifted to the east, and the sea rose, while a heavy, gray mist came up and enveloped them. Through this mist the cabin lights shone dimly so that when the woman started toward the companionway, she hesitated and cried out his name, not quite sure of her way.

Their hands met as he guided her along and Norcross knew as they said good night that in Lily St. John he had found a new interest, a woman who could make him forget himself.

Alone, he remained on deck until the dampness drove him indoors. And all the while he thought of her.

It was several hours after midnight when Norcross was awakened by the sound of many feet hurrying past his door. He sat up and listened. Outside the mad rush continued while voices were raised in anger and again in terror, questioning, shouting, cursing, until it all became a deafening mass of sounds, without rhyme or reason.

He jumped up, and going to the door, called to the hurrying, struggling people who thronged the passage-way. But they neither answered him nor saw him and he closed the door again and went back into his room.

Quickly he slipped on his trousers, found a Norfolk jacket and put his raincoat around his shoulders. Then he started up to the deck.

He found the doors to most of the staterooms wide open, and the saloons and corridors were likewise empty and deserted; and as he looked a sudden fear seized him and he hurried out to the crowded deck.

Here a lot of people, men, women and children, were frightened into a sort of stupor. They huddled together like a lot of bruised and beaten cattle, waiting with set faces for something to happen or for someone to act. No one seemed capable of thinking for himself, and like so many cowed animals they stood and waited. And above them hung the gray, treacherous fog, while from time to time came the shrill wail of the siren which only added to the noises made by the maimed ship—the groaning, throbbing, maddening noises which chilled the people's very hearts.

Into this hell came Norcross, only imperfectly grasping what had happened. He questioned a man who answered in awed, colorless voice.

"It's the fog—we've struck—the whole front of the ship is torn open—it's the fog."

"And the lifeboats are useless," cried a second man. "The sea is rolling up to the very decks—no boat can live in such a sea."

"There is no hope—nothing can be done," spoke a third.

"The poor women and the little children!" groaned another.

"God! poor us!" raved a man, cursing wildly.

"And Captain Trumbull?" questioned Norcross.

"There is trouble in the steerage—it is like Dante's *Inferno* down there," came the answer. "Captain Trumbull has given orders to shoot down the first person who attempts to come this side of the guard-rail."

Norcross turned a little faint at the idea of the crazed, desperate people below decks. He knew their kind—foreigners, the scum of all Europe, ready to fight like beasts for their lives and only held in check at the point of a gun.

Then, suddenly, he turned and hurried toward the staterooms. Lily St. John!—where was she? But at the door he stopped, while a soft touch upon his arm made him turn and look back. Across his shoulder he saw her, calm and completely dressed save for a head-covering.

"Lily!" he cried.

"I was looking for you," she said, catching his arm.

"I was going below for you," he told her.

"It's—terrible!" she whispered in an awed voice.

"Terrible! God!" he responded.

The siren shrieked wildly and with an unnerved little sob she threw her arms about his neck. A moment and she was herself again, calm and self-possessed.

"It—it was that awful thing," she said. "I hate it—it frightens me always; it sounds like a human being in agony."

He caught her arm and held tightly. "You mustn't give way like that again," he told her firmly. "You will need all your strength, every ounce of it, before the night is over."

"Over?" She met his eyes, then quietly went on: "Why, I know—everybody knows. We are caught like rats in a trap. Nothing can be done. I am not afraid."

"Surely it's not so bad as that!" he cried.

"This is the end," she nodded.

"You mustn't say that—you sha'n't!" he said, almost roughly, shaking her by the shoulders.

She opened her eyes and smiled. "Why, I really don't care—for myself. It's awful, terrible, to think of all those poor women and children, but it—this—will save them much suffering in after years. If there were no one but myself—"

"There is someone else. There is myself," Norcross said quietly.

"You mean—?"

"That this just can't be the end, because there is so much awaiting us in the land beyond the fogs, Lily. Oh, little woman, we both have suffered, God alone knows how much or how little, but now—we will begin again. We've just got to live—for each other; don't you see, dear?"

"You love me!" she cried in wonderment.

"I love you," he answered.

"How much?" she asked, with painful earnestness.

"So very much that life has become worth while because of you," he told her gently.

"Better than anything, anybody—Edith—your son?" she demanded.

He turned and a little lump rose in his throat. She saw the sudden look of a stricken animal that had leaped to his eyes, and, seeing, had understood.

"There, don't answer my last foolish question!" she cried hastily. "It was—silly, so silly and childish, and mere jealousy, besides. Only—don't answer—please!"

"You are more to me than any living person," he said in a tone that carried conviction.

She nodded and pressed his arm. Together they started up the deck, but had gone only a few paces when an officer commanded them to keep back.

"We are trying to hold down the steerage," he said, "and besides, Captain Trumbull is going to try again to float the life-boats. If you will take the lady—ladies and children first—"

"We will go over to the other side—"

no one is over there," spoke Mrs. St. John to Norcross, turning away.

"Never mind the boats. There is something I must tell you. I did not mean to tell you, but now—I must."

He led her away to the other side of the ship and they sat down together, strangely enough in the very chairs where they had sat when first they saw each other. It was very damp and chilly, but the woman drew her furs up around her shoulders and Norcross lifted the collar of his coat so that it kept out the wet. From time to time the cry of the siren rang out discordantly, and again, the red glare of the rockets pierced the gray fog like a shaft of fire. The cabin passengers who huddled together around the life-boats were strangely silent, but now and again a deafening noise arose from the direction of the steerage, and once two pistol-shots were fired.

Lily St. John leaned back in her chair, her eyes gazing into space. Norcross felt for a cigarette, but he hadn't one.

"Listen," she said suddenly. "It's this I want to tell you: I am the woman who—murdered your son."

Norcross never moved. There hung a death-like stillness.

"Don't you hear me?" she repeated shrilly. "I am Felicia Mandeville, who ruined your son, who drove him to take his life. I am the woman he squandered thousands of dollars on, and who left him for another man. I am the author of all his sins, the cause of his being buried, alone and unmarked, in a strange land. Don't you understand? God! man, answer me!"

"It's a lie!" he said hoarsely. "It's a lie—lie—lie!"

She opened her lips and closed them again, setting her teeth until the blood came.

"Oh, if it only were!" she wailed.

And the man listening knew that it was the truth. This woman whom he loved had murdered his son.

"I ought to kill you!" he cried, rage flashing in his kindly blue eyes.

"You may. I have no excuse to offer. What I did I did deliberately and with-

out thought or care as to the consequences. Your son was as other men—all men—are to me. The world owes me a living and I live well."

He caught her and shook her back and forth until she panted for breath. Her hair came uncoiled and fell in a dark cloud around her face, framing it so that only her eyes gleamed strangely out at him. When he let her go she reeled and would have fallen had he not caught and pushed her back into a chair.

"Oh, you, you, you!" he cried, completely unnerved. "My God, *you!*"

"I—I—deserve it—all!" she gasped.

"That it should be you—you of all persons in the world!" he said brokenly.

She made no answer. It seemed to her just then that there was nothing more to say—all the words, and tears and regret could not undo the past nor bring back his boy. She fixed her eyes on the floor and waited.

After a little Norcross spoke again and in a calmer voice. "Why have you told me this?" he asked simply.

"Because we are both at the door of death and I felt that I must," she replied.

"If you had only left it unsaid!" he groaned. "If I only could have died believing you to be—all that my love painted!"

She shook her head sadly. She was very calm now, calm and self-possessed, and the man, catching her expression, was a little afraid for her.

"What shall we do?" he asked almost helplessly.

"Do?" she smiled, and shrugged her shoulders. "We must wait until the water creeps up and claims us."

"I didn't mean that," he exclaimed.

"That is all there is for us to do," she told him.

"Plans are of little use to us now; nothing matters really. You may hate me, but in a little while it will be over. That is why I told you—because this is Death and because I—love you!"

"Oh, my God!—and this after what has happened!" he cried, shrinking back aghast.

"What has happened is past and this is the end," she answered wearily. "What does it all matter now? Let us forget it and remember only ourselves. Oh, mine has been a weary road, though it has been well paved and lighted! You are the first man who has ever touched my heart and I have lived eight-and-thirty years. I am bad all through. I never loved your son. My beauty is my fortune. That is my life in a word. Were New York and parting but a matter of a few days I would never have told you this—nor who I was. But this is the end of it all and the time for truth. Won't you forget everything but that I am the woman you love? Remember it is only a question of minutes."

"I can't—I can't!" he said, with set features.

"Robert!" she called softly.

There was a moment of silence; then he caught her in his arms and drew her to him, clasping her in his embrace and speaking rapidly, hoarsely in her ear; only for a moment, and then she drew him toward the chairs.

"Now let us sit here and wait," she said.

How long they sat there together neither of them seemed to realize. From the other side of the ship came the death-like sounds of the waiting passengers, the subdued roar of the steerage and the roll of the sea, broken by the fitful wail of the siren as it cried aloud again and again.

Once the woman moved, and slipping a locket from her neck gave it to Norcross. It was a cheap, sorry little thing, and on its surface was a bit of engraving poorly done. By the red glare of the rockets Norcross read the single

word thereon. It was "*Eheu!*" which he knew meant "Alas!"

And presently there arose a shout and a cry and Lily gripped his hands convulsively, thinking it was the end. But the noise increased a hundred-fold, sobbing, curses, prayers, so that Norcross left his chair and crossed the deck.

"Look!" he called to Mrs. St. John.

She followed him. Before them, a half-mile away, thought the man, gleamed the lights of an ocean steamer. She had seen their vessel's rockets and was coming with aid.

Side by side they stood watching the ship as it plowed through the gray fog. Around them strong men wept while women prayed aloud. It was the end, but with a difference.

Directly the ship came within hailing distance, the woman turned and held out her hand to Norcross.

"If we ever meet again, this hour has never been—remember, please, for my sake," she said earnestly.

He bowed his head.

She lingered by his side a moment longer, then passed down the deck and was lost in the crowd.

Norcross made no attempt to follow her. He watched her go and made no sign to stay her. Around him the people pushed and hurried, their despair turned to joy; he did not move.

Suddenly he leaned over the ship's rail, and there far below him he caught a glimpse of the angry sea. For a second he hesitated; then he walked back and waited for his turn to be carried over in the life-belt.

After all, there was still his daughter, and when she needed him he must not fail her.



ROUGH ON THE MASSEUSE

THE VISITOR—Don't you think Schopenhauer a terrible misogynist?

MRS. NEURICH—I don't know. The one I've got now is bad enough. It seems to me that she's rubbing more wrinkles in than she's taking out.

RAPTURE'S ROADWAY

By G. B. Lancaster

THE sun was dropping low over the Banda sea and its thousand little islands of palm and white reef and naked basalt. It had spread them with gold, pure gold; broken now and again by spume upflung from a jagged coral underway. A little trade-steamer labored up past Pucarry; lost her northing at Sogo, and turned half-speed into the narrow Eastern Passage which runs between Ululoe and a half-mile of reef-torn sea.

Then the blood of the tropic twilight was on her, on the sea. It came in blotches, in streaks, in frothy running rivers that washed away in onyx and purple. The last lights blazed silver over the drooping fan-palms on Ululoe, struck a wave-crest to a curled lip of scarlet, pulled southward and died in the hurrying night. And the broken siren-song of Ululoe of the death-reefs and the beauty came over the water.

A boy in the waist of the steamer straightened to hear it, catching his breath with a gasp. For the passion, the mystery, the promise of the tropics were about him in the sound and in the dark settling down with that subtle closeness which is like the near presence of some living being. And the call of the tropics was in the light wind that fretted the wave-tops and plucked at the halliards, and touched the dried skins of the half-dozen men smoking under the leeward awning. The call was new to the boy; but it rang in his heart as it rings in the hearts of all men when their blood is hot and the sap of youth quick in their veins. And it is a cruel call to many, because they must give answer their life long.

But the boy did not know this. He

chewed his pipe-stem and swayed, with legs apart, looking out on the nearing mangrove swamps and the phosphorescence running on the sea between. He was new-come to manhood, with all manhood's passions yet to know, and an eager heart that these things would not lightly tame.

"I'll swim in the sea," he said, "an' I'll fish. An' I'll go round those buoys in a row-boat. The only white man there! Lord, it's going to be ripping."

It was going to be Life, with all that Life means. But the boy did not know this either.

Under the awning pounded the steady talk of the fresh world that was near for the boy—the talk of men who had seen and known; talk, high-seasoned, quick, technical; blown through with quick laughter, rising to dominant assertion; talk that touched nakedly on life and death, on sin and pleasure in the raw. And the boy listened, with long deep chest-breathing and his eyes lit.

Then someone called him from the row of red pipe-dottles specking the gloom.

"Larry! Come an' tell Hallan that yarn you told us last night. Larry-y-y—!"

Larry gave no answer; and it was three minutes later that Hallan, looking up at the noise, saw the boy borne into the midst by a dozen willing arms, and set under the swinging lamp.

"Larry," he began, half-laughing.

But the boy shook himself free and stood up, and his reckless, well-looking young face was white with anger.

"I told you I wouldn't tell it, an' I

won't, he said. "What more d'you want?"

"The yarn," said Archer, grinning. "Go on, kid. Give obedience to your betters when they ask it."

"Better!" Larry knocked out his pipe and re-filled it with slim, long hands that matched the rest of him. "Better! I don't acknowledge better. That implies inferiority. Any of you chaps got a light?"

Hume brought a box out of his side-pocket and handed it over.

"Where was you hailin' from, I wonder?" he said slowly.

Larry's virile face flashed up in the match-flare.

"Townsville—an' out West beyond it. Every time."

"Thought so. And where to?"

"Ululoe. After that—devil knows where. I don't."

"He'll know, sure enough." Archer's voice was curiously quiet and he did not look at the others. "What for?"

Larry sucked life into his pipe, giving no answer.

Archer sat up, and there was a grate in his voice.

"What for? Can't you speak when you're spoken to?"

Larry faced round with steady eyes on the elder man, and Archer's brow contracted at the stern lines of mouth and forehead. This boy had the hair-trigger temper and the insane pride that birth in a hot land often gives, and—he was going to Ululoe.

"Can't you take a snub when it's given you?"

Archer gasped. Then he lay back and roared with the others.

"It's the North Australian deserts bred you," he said. "With their heat and their sand and their damned don't-caring. All right. I can do a little guess-work as well as the next man. You've got the signaling-station, I suppose, and so you'd best forgive us; for Hallan brings the *Tortoise* through the Eastern Passage seven times a year, an' she's yours to make or break when you've got the handling of the buoys."

Larry yawned, stretching his arms over his head.

"I guess the British Government doesn't keep those buoys there just for the *Tortoise*," he said lightly; then he dropped into a chair and picked up the second mate's banjo, thrumming the strings with clever fingers.

Archer looked down the line, saw Hallan's chair empty, and followed him aft with an inward fear.

Hallan was a quiet man, with the curbed tongue and the indefinable power that belong to those who have the march of Earth's full regiment for the untrod ways beside the track; and once only had Archer dared fumble with his inner life. But he was going to do it again just now. He leaned his elbows on the rail by Hallan's and said:

"You heard that boy say he's going to Ululoe?"

"He told me so when he came aboard," said Hallan. But he did not look at the other, and his face was drawn.

"She is still there?"

"Yes."

"Then—he will be the next."

Hallan was silent. He loved the one white woman on Ululoe as men love once only; and the pain that he would never kill was quick in his heart, and the longing for lips and hands that he had kissed unforgotten.

"He will be the next," said Archer. "And he's too wild for it. A good woman might make something great of him. A bad woman—I wonder what women like her are made for?"

Hallan laughed shortly.

"To torture men," he said; but his voice broke on the words.

Pity stirred in Archer for this man who could not forget. But years had given to Hallan a sanity which the boy Larry might never live to gain.

"You must warn him, Hallan," he said.

"Warn him!" Hallan turned on his heel with a curt laugh. "Warn him! Will a man ever be warned from a woman like her? We're human."

"But you must warn him," said Archer again.

Hallan gave no answer, though Archer waited long. Then he turned.

"They've got that old piano going in the saloon, Archer," he said. "Come down and hear 'em."

Larry met them at the door and his young eyes were frank.

"I got on my hind-legs just now," Archer, he said. "I apologize."

Archer laughed.

"All right," he said. "You're not built to run on all fours, I think. Larry, Hallan wants to speak to you a minute."

He crossed to the piano and Larry looked on the elder man with his lips twisted in a smile.

"Well?" he said.

Hallan said a quick oath under-breath. Then something in the young, soft lines of jaw and chin touched him. This boy had all the freshness of morning; but the arid heat of noon-day would come for him as it comes for all men.

"I told Archer I wouldn't," he said. "It's no use. We're all fools at heart."

"Are we? When?"

"When we love, or think we love. Larry, you will find no white men on Ululoe, and only one white woman. Keep away from her. She'll break you, body and soul, as she's broken others."

Larry shot a keen glance into the dark, twitching face.

"You've got a mighty high idea of the strength of my moral and physical capacities," he said shortly.

"Don't be an ass. You're no better than other men—"

"What's your warrant for using a woman's name this way to a stranger?"

"Warrant!" The red ran up to Hallan's forehead. "Warrant! Surely a man may warn a boy—?"

Larry's youth was a burden to him many times. He flared into swift wrath.

"Perhaps so. And surely the boy may be excused if he thinks that the man has private and personal reasons for his warning."

The words struck deep; deeper than Larry's idle anger had meant. For one instant he thought that Hallan would hit him. Then Hallan turned.

"That ends it," he said, very low. "Go to the devil if you will."

"Thanks," said Larry gaily. "I probably shall."

He crossed the saloon, slid his fingers over young Hitchcock's on the keys, and trolled out a music-hall song in his round young tenor.

Hallan heard it as he climbed the companion again.

"E-gypt! If you don't want me
Why will you haunt me
The way you do?"

It was over-cruel, coming after Larry's words. Hallan stumbled to the rail blindly, catching the breath of the land-wind on his forehead. The *Tortoise* lay at anchor in a little bay below the rip of the Eastern Passage, and from the palm-fringed lip of Ululoe a boat ran out to her through the gleaming moonlight. The boat had taken Hallan back with it into heaven many times. Now, it came for another man; and a half-hour later Hallan saw him go, standing in the stern-sheets with the mystery of the moonlight and of his untried youth on his face, and his gay words echoing back over the water.

Archer shivered a little in the hot air.

"He's fire to play with, that youngster," he said. "And will she know it—until it's too late?"

II

FOR one swift, eager week Larry flung himself into his work and slaved day and night until his young strength was spent. With Crane, the relieving officer, he went through and through the reef-toothed Eastern Passage until its boiling hidden menace was an open book to him and the sweat ceased to spring out on hands and feet when he took the tiller. He muttered sentences from the code-book in his sleep; he knew the flag-lockers in the dark, and he laughed at Crane when Crane gave thanks that he himself was not a permanency.

"It's not the loneliness," said Crane, "though that chips a fellow at times. It's not the heat nor the niggers. It's those infernal currents—shifting, shifting, and just a difference in the color of the sea to tell how the tide sets."

Larry lay on the crest of the lighthouse hill, looking down on the glory of flower and vine that laced the great trees below. To his left the cliff fell sheer to the rocks, and he kicked a stone over, hearing it crack like a rifle-shot where it struck.

"With the buoys or the signals wrong a man would get what he'd get if he fell over there," he said lightly.

"Ah! don't, kid," said Crane, and rolled back under the pandanus shade. "A man chucked himself down that last year. He's buried round by the strip of beach, and if the niggers tell you he walks don't believe 'em."

Larry turned, rubbing up tobacco in his strong hands, and there was no alarm in his voice.

"Walks? Why should he? What did he do?"

Crane looked at the boy curiously. Then he said:

"You've heard of the white woman of Ululoe? Yes; I thought so. You'll hear more of her yet. Mackenzie loved her; and he was engaged to a girl at home. So—he chucked himself down there. They say he walks to warn the next man. I haven't seen him—or her. But you'd best look out, kid."

A sudden indefinable fear shivered along Larry's veins. The subtle poison of the tropics was already beginning its work, and the new responsibility was stirring unknown fibers in him. Then he shook the fear off, filling his pipe with swift, impatient fingers.

"Oh, rot! I've heard that before. Is it necessary for every man to make a fool of himself over her?"

"Couldn't say," returned Crane carelessly. He sat up, staring down on the laughing water that dashed to its death on the hidden reefs, and presently he began to sing:

"Pale hands I loved beside the Shalimar,
Where are you now? Who lies beneath
your spell?

Whom doth thou lead on rapture's road—
way far

Before you agonize them in farewell?
Pale hands I loved beside the Shalimar,
Where are you now? Where are you now?"

The sounding rocks where Mackenzie had flung himself made answer; and the sea-birds crying in the Eastern Passage, and the slow drip of moisture in the steaming forest about them. Larry drew his breath sharply, unevenly. He was tasting the first suggestion of manhood, with its dangers and its strong passions, in these latter days, and the flavor was strangely sweet on his palate. For him the deep of life as Mackenzie had known it, as Mortimer and other men knew it, was yet unplumbed. But the swift rush of blood along his veins told him that one day he most surely would plumb it.

"Bad grammar," said Crane, tossing a little green orange across the coral track to the knot of native huts set like a bee-swarm under the lighthouse lee. "Bad grammar; but it seems to fill the bill so far as this woman is concerned. Come on in, kid. These mosquitoes are the very deuce."

In the next afternoon Crane went north to Sumatra, and Larry stayed alone to find or lose his soul as Fate might fall. He had a staff of three natives and a half-caste Spaniard; and when he had been his round of the buoys in the morning and run up the explanatory flags on the pole at the entrance to the Passage the full day lay yet before him; empty, draining him with its close heat of mental and bodily vigor, and ripening him for such evil as might befall. And if the days grew stale with their eternal monotony the nights were worse. Nights blazing with golden moonlight bright as day; nights when the cruel, breathless air of his hut drove him out in his pajamas to the mysterious vaults of the forest where the alligators' human crying along the mangrove swamps drew answers from the jabbering monkeys in the high trees.

It was at such times that the boy-

hood in Larry woke and tore his heart with longing for home. And then came the night which shook him out of his boyhood and taught him what men may know.

There was heat and glare on the coral round the lighthouse and the native huts. The mosquitoes were a thick cloud, and the sore-eyed children were crying and the mothers scolding in high-pitched Malay. Larry fled from it to the cool, singing sea and the dark, and the sweet, sensuous scents that the eternal forests of the Line know and use for man's undoing. He was sick at heart and bone-tired, and his quick temper was on edge. He crashed a way down through the vines and the undergrowth of wild myrtle and lime and stinging nettle, until the murmur of the sea gave him welcome with the ripple at a boat's cut-water to help.

Larry cut his rubber shoe as he sprang across the coral reef to catch the one figure in the boat by the arm and swing it out at his feet.

"Good Lord," he said. "You black fool, are you mad? You no go along over the Passage tonight. I tell-e you that all day, don't I? Too many boat top-side in it all time. No go at night . . . don't struggle, you little fool! Curse you, will you do as you're told!"

"Ah-h . . . but you hurt me . . ."

The low voice was English, and the thrill in it made Larry suddenly giddy. He dropped her, fumbled for a match and struck it. And in the swift, yellow glare of it he saw her first, with her small face like a child's, and her quivering lips, and her heavy hair, dark as the night on the sea. She swept back the loose sleeve from her arm.

"Look what you have done," she said, and lifted her eyes to his.

Larry saw the angry flush on the white flesh. Then he forgot it, looking into her eyes. He forgot his amaze; he forgot the match until it burnt his fingers. Then he shook it off and his eyes came back to her arm.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Oh . . . I'm sorry." And he stooped and kissed the white curve of it, with a

sudden startled delight at its sweet softness.

She laughed, very low, when he stood back, half-ashamed, looking down on her.

"What made you do that?" she asked.

"I—I don't know." Larry spoke unsteadily. "I beg your pardon. I never meant—"

"Do you men ever mean the half that you say or do—to us?"

Larry reddened. He had not been called a man very often as yet.

"I don't know," he said again. "You—you wouldn't like me to have meant to hurt you, would you?"

"But there are times when it is best to mean to hurt," she said. "Far best. You don't know anything of that. Or . . . perhaps . . . do you? Have you heard of me?"

She turned to him with the moonlight on her uplifted face and the shadow in the deep eyes. To Larry in his homesick desolation she was something sent him straight from heaven. He flung out his hands to her.

"I don't believe it," he cried. "They're liars. You couldn't help it—"

She looked at him swiftly. Then she turned.

"Go back," she said. "Go back, and don't come to me again. I didn't know that you were—were what you are. It is better for you to go away—now."

Larry caught her shoulder and stooped over her, laughing in her eyes. In the insolence of his young pride and his untried, eager heart he knew that he was wiser than any man or woman of them all. He did not tell her so in plain words. But he tried to tell her; for the gateway into the untrod land was passed, and the intoxication of its air was in his blood.

Three hours later he went to his room, casting himself on the cane bed and bursting through the mosquito-netting, unheeding. There was heat in the back of his eyes and in the apple of his throat, and his pulses beat unevenly.

"God made her," he said. "God made her like that; with her wee white hands an' that laugh . . . an' her eyes. I'll kill Hallan for what he said. There's no one like her. No one. And—why is it? What is it?"

For nine sweet, terrible days he tried to find out. Then he gave it up, and flung himself, body and soul, before her.

"For I love you," he said. "I don't know how an' I don't know why, an' I don't care. You can do what you like with me. Only—don't hurt me any more. I can't bear it. It's you or death. And I believe that you are death, for you have killed everything in me that is me. There's only you. I didn't know such a thing could be. Oh . . . tell me . . ."

She had heard that cry before, from men. But it had not stirred her as this boy's passion stirred her. A moment she hesitated. Then the nature in her overcame the bitter thought, and she leaned forward, meeting his lips with hers.

From the day Larry went into a new world; a passionate, elusive world, where bliss slipped through his fingers only to be caught again and yet again, and never to be held securely. Step by step she led him down the road that has no back way, and in his youth he tasted the wine of life as many men never taste it through all their years. It was the first great love that small men laugh at, not knowing, and that wise men hear of with a twitch at their own heart-strings. And it was more terrible because the fierce temper that was Larry's birthright had been forged by the glamour and the heat of the tropics to a double-edged knife of hardest steel.

There were times when she hated him; there were times when she feared him; there were times again when she might have loved him but that she had no love to give. And Larry worshiped her, and obeyed her, and defied her, and came again to her feet with broken words and self-abasement.

"For I'm worth nothing," he said. "Nothing. I'm a brute only. But if

I had to die this hour I'd thank God for having lived. And I'd thank him for you. For you!"

It was at such times that he frightened her, and she hid her eyes away from him.

"Did you never thank God for anything before?" she asked him.

"Not since I was a kid. I—just lived, you know. We all do. But now—look at me." He caught her face between his strong young hands and turned it up. "Tell me that no two ever loved as we love—as we always will love," he said.

She looked at him with a slow smile in her eyes. And he dropped his hands with a sudden cry, and took her in his arms.

"Ah!" he said. "When you look at me like that you make me mad. I think of you—think of you all the time. And I think of what might be if another man was sent here to take my place. And I can't bear it. I didn't know that there were heaven and hell on earth before; but you have had me into both often enough since I knew you. And I can't bear it. I'll make sure of you. I'll take you over to Terrian tonight and marry you. Then I'll never lose you again. Do you hear? Come with me. Come! Now!"

He was not the boy he had been when she found him, and of his manhood she had not yet control. Hallan had guessed how it would be if ever this hour came to the two. But she was not afraid—yet.

"Dear love," she said, and leaned away from him, speaking low. "Don't you trust me better than this?"

Larry laughed, and his hot, strong hands held her tightly.

"Trust you? I don't know. I love you. And you're mine. Mine, to do what I like with. So I'll take you. Do you understand?"

"It is you who don't understand," she said, changing front swiftly. "You are talking foolishness, Larry. I can't, and—"

Larry caught her chin with one hand and turned her face to him.

"You'll explain that," he said, and

his voice had a new note in it. "Look at me. Now . . . why can't you?"

His very youth made him brutal; made him unsubjective to her woman's power which had broken other men. She knew it suddenly. And then came the terror which Hallan had foreseen.

"Larry," she cried. "Don't hurt me. Don't be cruel. I can't help it, Larry; it's not my fault that I don't love you—"

"You . . . don't love me?"

"Larry—"

"By heaven, you'll answer me that! Do you love me?"

"No. I—I—"

"Then—look at me, will you—have you done this to me as you have done it to other men, just for amusement?"

The ring in his voice hurt her as she had thought she could never be hurt again. She looked away from him to the sea flinging itself in useless desperation on the rocks below, and she felt one pang of pity for it. Then from the mangrove-line came the impatient whining of a young baboon, strayed in the dark, and the sound brought a glint of laughter to her eyes.

"You're not very old yet, Larry," she said. "And you don't understand. I came here because I wanted to get away from everyone. I hated my life . . . and I hated people. I hate them still. But they don't hate me, and—I must follow my nature. Now let me go. That is all."

An older man might have understood. Larry did not. He held her fast and his laugh cut her.

"Wait a minute. Is that all? I don't think it. You have taken everything from me. What do you want to do with me now? No . . . don't struggle. Answer me!"

Then anger and fear made her truthful, and she flung her words at him.

"Do with you? Nothing. Go away and grow into a man. You're a boy—only a boy. And you thought I could love you!"

Larry took his arms from her then. He stood back, rubbing his hand dazedly across his forehead.

"A boy?" he said. "Yes; I was a

boy—until the first night I kissed you. But I am not a boy now, and—" he looked straight at her in the brilliant moonlight. "I will kill you for this," he said.

There are many ways in which a woman can bind or loose a man, and she had cause to know them all. But her hold on Larry was gone. The passion of the tropics which ripens hearts before their time had caught him with his chivalry unawakened and only the savage strength of his insulted boyhood to guide him.

"I will kill you," he said, still looking at her straightly. "You've killed everything in me—except hell."

She believed it then, and the cruel, relentless justice of his words struck home to her. But fear had weakened her limbs and her heart, and she dropped on her face among the tangle of grass and vines, with her lips stumbling over half-forgotten prayers.

Out in the chill white of the moonlight the man stood still, and from the sea came the eternal fretting moan of the waters in the Passage. And the woman cried with it, low and piteously; for all that she had lost and for life that was still so sweet.

Then Larry's voice broke the stillness; and it was high and sharp with passion.

"What have you come for? You?"

She uncovered her eyes with a quick gasp of hope. Then she lay unmoving, with the sweet eyes that men had kissed widening and growing dark with dread.

Between herself and Larry came a white man-figure, walking swiftly, silently. And the face of the figure was the face of Duncan Mackenzie, a full year dead in his grave at the cliff-foot.

She felt him come nearer, more near. The chill of his presence was about her, and wild fear of the dead over-rode her terror of the living.

"Larry," she cried. "Come! He is dead. Oh . . . Duncan . . . don't touch me. . . ."

Then sense left her as Larry crossed the strip of moonlight and dropped on one knee beside her.

The fury and the despair were wiped from his face, and he looked up at the white figure with full understanding in his eyes.

"You loved her, too," he said. "And perhaps you thought that you could kill her. But of course you couldn't. The other way is the only possible solution, isn't it? Yes. I know."

He lifted the hair back from her face lightly, and brain and lips took the memory that he would carry with him into eternity. Then he stood up and turned to the cliff-top; walking eagerly, as Duncan Mackenzie once had done. And at his side Duncan Mackenzie walked that track again.

By the flag-pole he halted; glanced up at it and laughed a little.

"The *Tortoise* will be by tomorrow," he said; and loosed the rope, unbending the flag and running up another instead.

"That will bring Hallan, too," he said.

Then he walked to the edge of the cliff and halted again, speaking to that other who had passed the death that he was seeking.

"She made us live to the last inch of our being," he said. "And there can be nothing like it where we go. I'd take the same track if I had to begin all over again. But there's no more of it. So . . ."

The brown, wet rocks gave the ending. And round Ululoe the broken siren-song rose again, calling men as it had called them in the past.



INFINITY

By Florence Wilkinson

EARTH'S pangs and pains, they kiss or stab—
 A puny dwindling exaltation,
 But, oh, the spherul agony!
 To listen at night and understand
 The small steps of eternity!
 To smile and see
 At one's doom-hour, maybe,
 The star-sown Road
 Of a trans-spectral unity
 Curving across men's sleeping hands
 Its wakeful arched illumination.
 To capture once
 The speechless language,
 The haunting flash
 Of death's hushed fulmination!
 Once to have heard, once to have heard
 The first seed's arrogation—
 The ultimate Challenge,
 The flying Word,
 And then to follow, follow
 Beyond the farthest god's flame-darkened habitation.

TWO WOMEN

By Jeannette I. Helm

SHE had been lying there awake for some time watching the dawn creep grayly in through the window, bringing one familiar object after another out of the darkness: the white walls with prints tacked upon them, the table of medicine-bottles, her bed, and finally the bed of her neighbor opposite. She turned her head slowly and looked across. The occupant of the bed was sleeping with her face turned toward her, and she looked at it closely, glad of any new interest after the night's weary vigil.

It was a sweet young face she saw, shaded by masses of dark brown hair, with a childlike mouth, and long lashes that touched her cheek as she lay sleeping peacefully. The woman had been half asleep when the other was brought in the evening before, but she remembered hearing the nurses talking about her and the serious operation to be performed this morning. Now she studied her in the growing light, and wondered with a cool dispassionateness what mental caliber she had to support her in such a stress.

As she still watched her the other stirred and opened her eyes. They met those of the woman for a minute quite trustfully and happily, and then a sudden rush of memory and fear blurred and broke up their quiet depths. The woman looked away, half ashamed to be caught, even unconsciously, spying on her.

Presently she heard the other speaking.

"I beg your pardon, but do you know what time it is?"

The woman glanced at her watch.

"About half-past six."

"Thank you."

The voice was youthful and sweet, like the face. After a moment's silence she went on:

"I am glad there is not long to wait. They come for me at half-past seven."

"You have slept well?" the woman said rather curiously. "You are not nervous, then?"

"Terribly," the girl answered with a sudden shivering contraction of her whole body. "But they gave me something to make me sleep—I begged them to. I couldn't even bear the idea of the operation if it were not for my husband. I must be brave for him."

The woman lay silent for a little with averted face. The proud yet tender tone in the other's voice had struck savagely on a still throbbing memory. She remembered her own hour of trial and endurance, faced alone, and the bitter lines about her mouth cut themselves still deeper.

"He is so worried about me," the girl went on. "But he is so wonderfully brave and hopeful all the time. I know I could never go through the operation if it were not for him. Dying would be easier; but I have him to live for, so that helps me to go on."

She noticed the tenseness of the woman's attitude, and broke off.

"I—I didn't mean to bother you this way," she said, half timidly. "Only it makes the waiting less hard to talk to someone. But I won't speak if you want to sleep."

"I can't sleep," the woman answered briefly. "Please talk, if it helps you. Have you been married long?"

"Over a year," the girl said. "But

I can't believe it, even yet. He is so clever and strong and I am so stupid and foolish that it seems impossible to me that he should have cared to marry me. I often tell Keith that I can do nothing well but love him."

"Is that his name?" asked the woman quickly.

"Yes. I think it suits him so well. It is strong, like himself. He is coming as early as they will let him, and then you will see for yourself that he is really too good for me."

"Don't believe that," the woman said brusquely. "Very few men are too good for their wives. I found that out long ago."

The day had now fully dawned, bright and cold, and the clear light fell full upon her face, bringing out mercilessly its worn grayness. The girl, looking over, wondered what dull tragedy lay behind its still traceable beauty.

"Your husband is dead?" she ventured after a pause which the other did not seem inclined to break.

"He deserted me three years ago," answered the woman bluntly, "and I believed in him as much as you do in your husband."

The girl drew in her breath with a sharp sound.

"Please forgive me for asking—I didn't know—I thought—"

"It doesn't matter," the woman said wearily. "Only you see I have reason for what I said."

"You have been through a terrible experience indeed," said the girl, looking at her with a deep pity in her soft eyes. "But it is an exceptional one, I know it must be. It would kill me to think that he—that all men were so heartless and cruel!"

"I hope you will never have occasion to think so," said the woman, with an involuntary softening of her hard tone. "Keep in your paradise as long as you can. You can never get back again once it is lost, that I assure you."

They were both silent for a while. The ward was quiet and empty except for themselves, but outside a baby wailed fretfully from some distant room

and soft steps were heard hurrying up and down the corridors.

Suddenly the girl covered her face with her hands. "Oh, the awful, awful waiting!" she cried brokenly. "If it were only over now. I feel my courage going with every moment!"

"It will soon be over," soothed the woman. "It is not so terrible, after all—I know, for I have gone through the same thing—only you have youth and love on your side to fight for you. Think if you were alone! But you have him to live for."

"Oh, if I were only sure that he loved me!" wailed the girl. "All the rest would be easy to bear."

"Why should you doubt him?" asked the woman in some surprise. "Just a moment ago you told me how much he cared for you. Has he ever given you any reason to doubt him?"

The girl stared at her with eyes wild with pain and dread.

"No, never. He has always been love and devotion itself; but ever since he married me I have had a fear, unspoken and hidden—for I've always thrust it far away from me as long as I could—that some day I should wake up to find it was all a dream and I was alone once more. And now you have roused that fear by what you told me, and I cannot conquer it. You have made me wonder if perhaps he, too, is like other men—have made me think and fear—I don't know what!"

She broke off with a choked sob, and raised herself up in the bed wildly, gasping for breath.

The woman leaned over toward her quickly.

"Don't think of anything but his present love for you," she said, holding the girl with steady eyes. "Don't fear that your love may not stand the test bravely. It will—I know that!"

They seemed now to have changed places; the woman's voice was strong and full of courage, and the girl felt a sudden sense of support and uplifting as she met her firm gaze. She fought back her tears.

"Yes, you are right," she gasped. "I will be brave. I know he loves me,

and me only. But I would rather die than live to share his love with anyone else."

"You will not die then," said the woman, still with the same steady confidence in her voice. "I feel sure of that."

The girl leaned over suddenly and caught the other's hand.

"How you have helped me!" she said. "I cannot thank you enough."

The door was opened softly and the nurses came in. The woman lay staring up at the ceiling while they went about their morning duties. When all was finished the girl pushed aside the screen and smiled over at her.

"My husband is coming up to see me now," she whispered. "Now you will know why I love him so."

Nevertheless the woman did not turn to look when the door opened presently, and she heard the glad cry of welcome from the girl's bed; and it was only after a silence which lasted strangely long that she at last lowered her eyes slowly. They met those of a man standing still with his hand on the knob of the closed door behind him, and staring at her with a face blotted of all color and expression. Then suddenly the hospital walls, the narrow bed, the wondering girl opposite, dropped away from her sight like mist-wreaths from a hilltop, and left only herself and the man before her. Shrill voices seemed to be hammering in her ears, asking quick questions that her brain sprang to answer even before they took shape. Was this the reward of years of grimly patient waiting, of a never-acknowledged hope which yet had clung tenaciously at her heart? This the end of love and the beginning of hate? At all events—her brain made quick answer—she could strike, and terribly. Then why not do it? He had not hesitated to strike the blow which had wrecked and laid low her whole life, and had turned her love into a corroding blight! Now the scales had shifted and it was her turn to speak, to slay!

His eyes went for a swift instant to the girl and then returned to her in a

dumb, hopeless appeal. She knew well what he meant. Had the nurses not told her of the serious operation to be performed, and of the girl's weak heart? What was it the girl had said herself a few minutes—or was it hours—ago? "I would rather die than live to share him with anyone else!" To tell her the truth now, she well knew, would be the girl's death-warrant as well as his punishment. Well, what did it matter to her, after all? When the weak cling to the knees of the strong what wonder if they are trampled under. Let them be trampled under so long as revenge endures and hate stalks unsatisfied! So the voices shouted and urged—and then the girl spoke.

"I couldn't get a room, Keith; they were all taken; so they put me in here; but this is my friend, even though I don't know her name. We have been talking together and she has helped me to be brave, almost as much as you have, Keith. See how calm I am now." She held up her hand and showed him its steadiness with a smile. "I don't feel at all afraid of the operation. She told me that she felt sure it would be all right, and somehow I feel sure of it, too, now. Won't you thank her for me, Keith?"

A sudden flash of love lit up the somber eyes of the man as they turned toward her for a moment, but they dulled again hopelessly as they came back to the woman. Her own eyes were hard and cold as steel as she looked at them both. She raised herself up in the bed with an involuntary movement of recoil, and the girl watched her with half-hurt wonderment at her silence.

"Don't thank me," she said at last in a harsh, choked voice. "And don't thank him. Thank yourself for all that you have, get well, and be happy in your paradise."

She lay back again on the pillow with a sudden relaxing of her grim self-control that told how it had been shaken.

The man's face flushed for a moment and then paled as abruptly. He made a step toward the bed.

"Are you—do you mean—?" he asked hoarsely.

Her eyes burned him with their scorn. She had gained control of herself once more.

"See that you deserve her faith," she answered brusquely, and turning over on her side lay there with averted face. She heard his quick, indrawn breath of relief, the girl's puzzled call, "Keith!" heard him go to her with

one glad step, heard their murmuring voices and the noise of the nurses and attendants as they brought in the wheeled chair and took the girl out. But still she lay there motionless, staring with unseeing eyes at the white walls which seemed to close in upon her like a relentless future.



AN OLD SONG

By Arthur Ketchum

I WILL give you the Sun to wear
And the Seven Stars to crown your hair;
And the little new moon, so curved and sweet
Shall be the cushion for your white feet.

*O better, sang she, than stars to shine,
Thy man's rough hand to take in mine!*

I'll build you a palace of cedar wood,
You shall house you there as a princess should;
I'll bind the season you hold most dear,
And it shall be April all the year.

*O better, sang she, the months of the snow,
And the two chairs set in the hearth's red glow.*

There shall be music for your delight,
And laughter by day and a dream by night.
And pain and sorrow and Care's dark wings
Shall be forever forgotten things.

*O better, sang she, the old unrest
To bring him back to my waiting breast.*



CONFIDENCES

MRS. GRAMERCY—I married for love and it lasted only a year.
MRS. PARK—Pshaw! I married for money and we blew it all in before six months.

THE MOURNERS

By Pearl Wilkins

Run to your houses, fall upon your knees,
Pray to the gods to intermit the plague
That needs must light on this ingratitude.

SHAKESPEARE.

LEONARD GAYLORD, attorney-at-law, likewise by courtesy of the press, "municipal dictator," "past master of deals," "arch manipulator of official corruption," propped his morning paper against his coffee-cup, and was aware that leering up at him from the first page was a more than usually libelous cartoon of himself trampling rampant on the prostrate form of his native city. He read the headlines, sensational, double-leaded, the letters writhing like snakes above the columns:

THE NET SLOWLY CLOSES AROUND
LEONARD GAYLORD—DETECTIVE SCOTT
HOTFOOT AFTER TELEPHONE BRIBERS
—HAS EVIDENCE TO SECURE MORE
THAN ONE INDICTMENT—DOWN WITH
THE CROOKED SUPERVISORS! DOWN
WITH THE CROOKED MAYOR!! DOWN
WITH BOSS GAYLORD!!!

Gaylord folded the paper and went on calmly with his breakfast. His face, very white and non-committal, like that of a professional gambler, gave no index to his thoughts; his eyes, the color of steel or of ice with a shadow on it, reflectively considered at the cream-jug.

"So," he commented to himself as he reached for the salt, "they have me at last, have they? I'm cornered. They have the strangle hold. We'll see—by God!"

He opened a letter that lay beside the papers. It was from his father, he saw at first glance. He read it through

on the run, finding here and there phrases and sentences that jumped at him:

Mother had another stroke Friday. . . . She has not known any of us for over two weeks. . . . I sent word to Altab. Sara came yesterday. . . . We have two doctors and an A No. 1 nurse. We are prepared for the worst, yet hope that we may pull her through. The nurse . . .

He pushed away his plate and abruptly rose from his chair. His Japanese boy came in, helped him into his overcoat and handed him his hat.

"Good da," he wished in his oily Japanese voice as his employer brushed past him.

A small red runabout was chugging at the curb before the house, and as Gaylord appeared on the steps the chauffeur touched his cap, jumped out, and began to crank her up.

"All ready," he said. "Pretty foggy this morning."

Gaylord looked about him rather blankly as if he had just noticed that there was a fog. Then he nodded mechanically and climbed into the car.

They wheeled and backed and went trundling off down the avenue. As they were carried farther and farther into the business section from all sides rose the familiar, sickening sound of the day's grind. The murk and smoke mingled with the thick fog. Pavements were slippery, little drops of water collected on grimy walls and ran down them like tears on weather-beaten cheeks. From everywhere came the measured tramp-tramp of workers on their way to toil. Gaylord thought, fretfully, that as they streamed

along, distorted and grotesque in the enveloping fog, they were like continuously changing shapes in a nightmare. Street-cars, yellow as jaundice, clanged and grated; numbered buildings, shops, façades whirled and twisted by. Once, as Gaylord looked up, a window far above his head was raised and a painted Japanese girl leaned out into the morning, yawning and shivering, her heavy-lidded eyes disconsolately surveying the gray swarming cañon of the street as if she had just risen from a nostalgic dream. A sick automobile, towed by two clumsy farm-horses and with two disheveled men in high hats and evening clothes huddled ignominiously on the rear seat, passed slowly by like a ridiculous county fair "float" of "The Morning After."

Gaylord stared at all alike indifferently. Each scene registered itself on his brain only to be blotted out by the next. His head came up with a jerk, when without warning the chauffeur jammed his foot against the clutch pedal and brought the machine to a sudden stop.

"Why, what—" They were in a press of market-carts, delivery wagons, cabs, vehicles of all sorts. A couple of heavily loaded trucks had collided, and on either side stretched a long blockade of cars.

"We'll have to go slow," apologized the chauffeur. They moved forward and then stopped. Men on the stalled street-cars nudged their neighbors. "There's Len Gaylord," they observed. "Looks kind of white around the gills, don't he? Guess he's about at the end of his string."

Some street Arabs were worming nimbly in and out the crowd crying the morning editions, and one of them dexterously tossed an "extra" into the red runabout.

"Hello, Gaylord!" he called with the easy familiarity of the gutter. "Wanter read how you 'held up' the Gas and Electric?"

There was a chorus of loud guffaws, and Gaylord turned savagely on his chauffeur.

"Are we going to stay here all day?"

he snarled. "Get out of this, and be quick!"

A little later they reached the building where he had his offices, and he got out and mounted the stairs. The door of his outer office was already open, his stenographer had arrived and was at work; the office-boy was reading a yellow-back. With a brief "good morning" to them Gaylord unlocked a door and passed on into his inner sanctum. But he had been there only a few moments, when the boy appeared at the door.

"Mayor Kennedy," he announced.

"Show him in," ordered Gaylord automatically, and swung around in his swivel chair just in time to face his caller as he came in.

"Hello!" was his greeting.

The mayor dropped heavily into a leather chair. He was a big man and seemed to fill the room. His eyes gleamed red. "Seen the papers?" he inquired, and showed his teeth in rage or in terror.

"The papers are always yapping," observed Gaylord. He pushed forward a box of long, thin cigars. "Smoke?"

His Honor selected one with a pudgy hand that shook a little. "Well, they're yapping to some purpose now," he declared excitedly. "We're up against it good and hard. Where this infernal holy-war fever is going to land us the devil only knows." He lighted his cigar and pitched the match into the office cuspidor. "Jerry Aldridge and Joe Finch are a hard combination to beat," he groaned. "Jerry's got millions and a grudge against me, and Finch is not known all over the country as 'Ferret Finch' for nothing. They've started investigations, and by Lord Harry, we can't stand investigations!"

"We can't," agreed Gaylord.

The Hon. Fitzhugh Kennedy puffed miserably on his cigar.

"They're going to impanel a new grand jury," he palpitated. "We'll be indicted! Finch has Scott and a couple of other detectives on our track. He knows already how much the Wright Way Street-Car concern handed

us for their overhead trolley; he's found out about our deal with the Gas and Electric; he's wise to what the pool-sellers turned over to us the last racing season."

"Anything else?" inquired Gaylord. He hated excitable men.

The mayor went on vehemently: "You wouldn't ask that if you'd seen Gus," he declared. "Gus" offered the interesting combination of police-court lawyer, member of the Board of Supervisors and Chairman of the Finance Committee. Of the triumvirate of which he, Kennedy and Gaylord were members he was the go-between, the convenient scapegoat. "In the first place," continued His Honor, "somebody's been tampering with several of those brutes on the board. They've got it into their heads that we are lugging things and Gus says some of 'em are doing a little business on their own hook. He accused 'em of it and there was the devil to pay. They came at him like a lot of wolves. They insisted that there were others. They wanted to know what had become of that twenty thousand dollars those real estate fellows paid for the franchise you got for their street railway! I—"

It was as if he had put Gaylord in contact with a live wire. He sprang to his feet, whipped into a white fury. "You mean—!" he shouted incoherently. "You dare—!"

There was a tremendous pounding on the door. Then it opened and the office-boy entered, his head cocked at the nonchalant angle of one to whom the spectacle of clenched fists and men frothing at the mouth are ordinary occurrences. He slapped down a yellow envelope upon the desk.

"Telegram," he explained tersely, and went out.

Gaylord's arms dropped to his sides. He picked up the yellow slip and tore it open. As he read it the hot blood of rage ebbed slowly from his face.

"Mother is dead," was scrawled upon it. "Funeral tomorrow 2.30. Come at once.—SARA."

For a moment he was motionless—

cold. Then he silently handed the paper to the man before him. The mayor took it in with a single glance. His half-smoked cigar fell from his open mouth and rolled out upon the floor.

"Jove!" he sympathized. "That's bad! What will you do?"

"Do?" exclaimed Gaylord dully. "Why, if you think you and Gus can handle things without me I'll leave on the next train."

His Honor frantically mopped his face and forehead with his handkerchief.

"I'm afraid you'll have to see Collins first," he admitted hoarsely. "I've had it as a straight tip that he's on the verge of going over to Aldridge, and you know what that means for us. He and Gus would come to blows in five seconds, and I can't get within a mile of him ever since I turned down that bill board ordinance of his. And there's Macready and O'Brien's case. I wish—"

"Oh, all right," interrupted Gaylord in a lifeless voice. "I'll see what I can do."

The mayor drew a long breath of relief. "And say, old man, don't hold against me what I said a moment ago. I merely repeated what those brutes insinuated. I told Gus I knew you were straight. I see why you can't force those fellows to come to time. And anyway I guess the events of the past few weeks have thrown us all out of gear. Let me know how you come out with Collins. You'd better not come to my office, though, or they'll have it on the street in an hour. I'll get a room at 'The Lorraine' and we can have our talk there. Well, I must get on. So long."

"So long," echoed Gaylord mechanically. He heard him pass through the outer office and then go down the stairs. He sat and stared at the door as if it were iron and padlocked.

"God!" he said.

The telegram had fallen upon the floor, but he did not pick it up. He had no time for grief; he must keep his nerve, think, act. The next few hours he would work under tremendous

pressure. There were a hundred things to be done, a dozen men to be interviewed, parleyed with. A little cellarette stood in one corner of the room, and going over to it he unlocked it, took out a flask of brandy and a glass and poured himself a stiff drink.

He put in the most exhausting day of his life. His afternoon ran far into the night. It was midnight when he at last presented himself at the ticket-office and asked for a ticket to Gaylordsville. There were no more Pullman berths to be had and he was forced to resign himself to a seat in the day coach. But he told himself wearily that it made no difference.

At daybreak that morning he reached the little forgotten country where he had passed his boyhood. As the train slowed he saw out of the window the familiar spectacle of half-grown boys and overalled and unshaven men gathered on the platform. He picked up his bag and alighted, and from the staring group a tall, awkward young fellow disentangled himself and slouched forward to meet him.

"Howdy!" he drawled. "Guess you're Mr. Gaylord, ain't you? They was expectin' your sister, Mrs. Seymour, too, but I guess she didn't come."

He led the way to where a horse, hitched to an unwashed buggy, was tied at the gnawed railing. Gaylord clambered in and they rattled up the main street of the town past places that he remembered—the three "stores," the post-office, the harness-shop, the little hotel. They stopped at last before a large, square house painted white and with a ragged lawn in front. As Gaylord got out and strode up the brick walk, two long streamers of crape fluttered out to him like wringing hands.

Then the door was opened and he found himself in the old-fashioned "entry," from the farthest end of which a little knot of men and women, black-robed, solemn, heavy-eyed as if with long vigils, faced him with a sudden cessation of talk. Gaylord was conscious of the shuffling of feet and the acrid odor of new crape. A woman dressed in black and an elderly man,

very handsome in a portly, florid fashion, came forward to greet him.

"Ah, Leonard," they said. "You are here at last. We looked for you yesterday."

They were his father and his elder sister. Gaylord shook hands with the one and kissed the other. "I came as soon as I possibly could," he offered in excuse. "Alta is not here yet!"

His father mournfully shook his head. He wore his gray curly hair rather long and had a trick, exasperatingly youthful, of tossing it out of his eyes.

A very blond young woman in nurse's cap and apron came in from a side-door and he touched his son's sleeve.

"Miss Steyne," he said to her, "allow to me present my son; Leonard, this is the lady who comforted your mother's last hours. I do not know what we should have done without her."

Gaylord bowed stiffly. He passed on to the group at the end of the hall.

"Aunt Eliza, Uncle John, Cousin, how are you all? Aunt Jane, it comforted me a little to know you were with her at the last."

Someone brought him a cup of coffee and presently Miss Gaylord came up to him again.

"Do you want to come and look at her now?" she asked.

He followed her into the old-fashioned "front parlor," where drawn curtains made an artificial gloom. Their footsteps were muffled on the flower-strewn brussels carpet. Enlarged photographs of smug relatives stared down at them from the walls. The air was heavy with the scent of tuberose. Crosses, anchors, pillows, "mother" and "empty chair" pieces made of flowers burdened the chairs, the centre-table and the old-style piano. In the middle of the room on trestles rested the coffin.

The brother and sister went to it and stood side by side looking through the glass opening at the pulseless form beneath. She lay heavily in her coffin like a plow-horse dropped in harness, mother of these two. Long ago all

youth, all beauty, all light had been brutally crushed out of her under the iron juggernaut of the years. Even in death she was not much to look at. Above the rich silk and lace of her burial garments her face, meek, insignificant, hopelessly commonplace, rose with a sort of mockery. Her hands, gnarled, unmanicured, stumpy-fingered, folded on the flat, cold breast, told of toil; her closed eyes, dark-circled, spoke of tears; furrows on her brow were eloquent of pain. There emanated from her an air of sickening resignation, of awful weariness, of pitiful love-hunger. She was an accusation as she lay there.

As Gaylord stood looking down on her he realized for the first time what a hideous thing it is to be a mother. Nevertheless he felt no sense of loss, no grief, nothing but a great pulseless apathy. He wondered what was the matter with him. It was as if he himself were dead.

"Poor mother!" murmured Miss Gaylord at last, but her tone was emotionless and her brother stared at her coldly—angrily. Though he himself was as stone he had an idea that women somehow should be different.

Then he remembered—Sara was not a woman. She was of neuter gender. She was the president of a woman's college and had to her credit a book on "Elementary Physics," several papers on "Chemical Calculation," and a "Treatise on Grapho." She was as non-magnetic as the binomial theorem, as passionless as geometry, as devoid of aura as a table of logarithms.

"Poor mother!" she said again.

An elderly woman appeared in the doorway. "Your father wants you, Leonard," she announced; and the three left the room.

A little past two in the afternoon neighbors, villagers and friends of the family began to arrive. Gaylord, from his post at the sitting-room window, watched them come in buggies, in carriages and on foot. Miss Steyne and a servant ushered the ladies as they arrived into the big double parlors. The men stayed outside on the porch or in the yard. Gaylord knew that as

they talked in low tones they were discussing crops, the weather, local politics, and as an afterthought, the dead woman.

The undertaker, black-gloved, solemn, stalked from room to room giving orders with a fine air of competence.

The pallbearers were fitted with gloves and crape bands. The minister drove up.

Gaylord senior sought out his son. "Alta is not here yet," he fretted. "How like her it is to be late. But we can't delay any longer. We're going to begin."

They gathered in the front parlor. The family were seated in a semi-circle around the coffin and the crowd closed in about them. Among them Gaylord recognized friends and acquaintances of former days. He stared at them curiously. He remembered when they were a gay crew, pulsing with youth, claiming all good things, wild to see, to taste, to feel. Now they were tired and cold. Many had failure written on their faces. The men fidgeted in their cheap, wrinkled clothes, the women leaned dejectedly on their unfurled cotton umbrellas. They knew only the mean, the sordid, the commonplace. From them, dull-eyed, spiritless, discouraged as they were, an atmosphere disengaged that was undeniably weakening, unspeakably depressing.

The sermon was nearly over when Alta came. The humming of a touring-car heralded her approach. The men in the yard hastened down the walk to assist her to alight. The throng in the entry parted to make way for her. Behind her a correct maid followed, leading by the hand a boy of four. She appeared in the doorway of the parlor, her long black veil thrown back from her face, even in the combined disadvantage of mourning and motor gear distinctly ruedelapaixan. She brought with her the suggestion of a scent, troubling, tantalizing, that was the stolen lure of a strange flower; no two people could have been more unlike than she and her sister. Miss Gaylord was intellect, cold, unadorned, uninviting. Alta was—absinthe frappée!

It was as if someone had set a wonderful, useless vase among a collection of homely cooking-pots and earthen basins. Among these tired, provincial, clumsily-built beings her beauty shone forth, compelling, resplendent, malicious! They looked at her breathlessly and dully hated her—hated her for her face that was too white, for her mouth that was too red, for her hair that was gold with an alloy of copper; but most of all they hated her for her eyes; they were amethyst-and-jade, from under plaintive brows they looked forth with an assumed weariness and wrung the hearts of women with envy and the hearts of men with desire.

She kissed her father and sister and sank into a chair beside her brother. To a relative who inquired whether her husband was with her she replied in a whisper that Mr. Seymour was ill in bed with tonsillitis.

The minister coughed tentatively and took up once more the thread of his sermon. But its effect had been spoiled. All at once it seemed flat, platitudinous, uninteresting. As he ended rather lamely Gaylord remembered that even as a child Altah had never hesitated to shine people down, to belittle them, to "put them out" as a candle-flame the light of glow-worms.

Someone touched the piano and the throng filed slowly out, one by one looking hastily at the dead face, the women sniveling and wiping their eyes. When the last had gone Altah pressed her lips to the cold glass. Her father sobbed noisily. Sara stood with her black-gloved hands pressed tightly together. They made their farewells. Leonard was last. He stepped forward very quietly. He looked—long.

Then he turned away.

Altah hung heavily upon his arm as they went down the steps to the waiting carriage. At the little country churchyard they got out and stood in the tall, dead grass while the coffin was being lowered into the open grave. The pallbearers and the men near them took turns in shoveling. It took a long time. When the grave was filled

the people pressed around them with clumsy condolences.

"What a barbaric pageant is a country funeral," remarked Miss Gaylord, when after a silent homeward drive her brother helped her out at their gate.

As they entered the house Altah also turned to Gaylord. She was very nervous.

"I wish to speak with you—alone, Leonard," she told him hurriedly. "I have only an hour, as I must make the next train. Howard is so childish when he is ill. He made me promise to come back to him tonight. Shall we go into the library?"

Without waiting for his answer she hurried down the hall and opened a door. The "library" was a stuffy, little-used room. The air in it was old and stale. Gaylord went to the window and threw up the curtain, letting in the bleak, unpleasant daylight.

Altah tugged at her gloves. She drew a long breath as if nerving herself for an ordeal. Then she asked directly:

"Could you let me have five hundred or a thousand to tide me over until I get my allowance?"

Gaylord stared at her. "Doesn't Howard give you enough money?" he asked in surprise. "I thought he was the most generous of men."

"He is," admitted Altah with a slight smile. "Only he doesn't approve of—bridge."

"No? Neither do I."

Altah swung, suggestively, her little bauble of a purse. "Oh, well," she said flippantly, "who knows whether or not I approve of it? It's a costly joy. I've been frightfully unlucky the past few weeks and have had to part with several little trinkets. Sometimes I'm afraid that Howard suspects. I owe right and left and several of the women are perfect vampires. If it wasn't for Rita Wagner I should have come to grief long before this."

"Not Rita Wagner, the divorcee? Oh, Altah!"

"And why not? I'm in her debt to the tune of three hundred and she hasn't hinted at it by so much as a whisper."

"And what does Howard say to your friendship with her?"

"Howard goes his way and I go mine." Suddenly and furiously she turned upon her brother. "And who are you to cast stones?" she demanded tauntingly. "Who are you to cross-examine, to preach to me, to call me to account for my poor little misdeeds. Blackmailer, extortioner! Why, if I chose—"

But Gaylord interrupted her. "Of course I'll let you have the money, Alta," he said. "And I'll make it an even two thousand so you can pay off that Wagner woman. No, I don't want it back. I don't want a receipt for it. Here, I'll write you out a cheque now."

He acknowledged wearily her kisses and her thanks.

"I don't believe I'll come out to see you off, I've something of a headache. Give my regards to Howard and kiss 'Boy' for me. And, little girl, keep out of debt if you possibly can. It's bad for the soul. Good-bye, dear."

When she had gone, he dropped into a chair before his father's desk. The dusk closed around him as he sat there assailed with grim forebodings, his head resting on his outstretched arms.

Someone rattled the knob of the door bidding him "come out to supper," and mechanically he obeyed. The brightly lighted dining-room was full of black-robed aunts, uncles, cousins, and more or less distant "connections" who had found it impossible to get away before tomorrow's morning train, all conducting themselves with a proper degree of mournfulness yet undeniably relieved that "it was all over." They talked in low tones decorously though cheerfully. As Gaylord glanced around the table he wished that he had followed Sara's example and had something in his room. He excused himself before the meal was half over and went out into the neglected garden. It was very dark. A wet wind toyed capriciously with the piles of dead leaves under the vague black trees, now raking them together, now scattering them far and wide over

the disheveled lawn. There were no stars. Even as he stood peering into the baffling obscurity, rain began to fall.

He thought of that new-made grave. She would be afraid out there alone in the blackness and the rain! . . . When he reëntered the house, the gathering had repaired to the sitting-room. They were all clustered about the big centre-table and Gaylord noticed that his father sat very near Miss Steyne. Everyone looked up as he appeared in the doorway. He did not know it, but with his dark wet hair sticking to his temples, his blue-pinched nostrils, his face white as bleached bone, he was an object anything but reassuring.

Gaylord senior held in his hands a large red book.

"We were talking about—about tombstones," he explained ponderously. "I want to give your mother something handsome. She deserved it. She was a good woman. Sculptured angels and acanthus flowers and things like that. Aunt Eliza says there's some beautiful selections in 'Hill's Manual.' Here is one I like:

"Sweet is the scene when virtue dies.
When sinks a righteous soul to rest,
How mildly beams the closing eye,
How gently heaves the expanding breast!"

"Very appropriate," commented Miss Steyne insipidly.

Gaylord drew a snorting breath through his nose.

"Yes," he agreed, with a strident laugh. "Almost as fitting as: 'Her children rise up and call her blessed.'" And in the midst of a chorus of horrified exclamations he swung on his heel and left them.

He went to the room that had been allotted to him and slammed the door. The house had been built long before the day of furnace or radiator, and in the old-fashioned grate a fire was blazing and filling the room with crowding shadows. He drew up a chair and flung himself into it. Tardily, but at last, remorse was gripping him. In the house across the road a woman, pottering about her evening work, was

singing in a cracked, tremulous voice, distractingly out of key, the words of an old hymn. The rising wind slapped the lugubrious notes along with the rain mockingly against the closed windows:

"There'll be weeping, weeping—weep-ing,
At the judgment seat of Christ;
Parents and children shall be part-ed,
Parted, to meet no more!"

From time to time the image of his mother as she had appeared to him in her coffin, old, withered, wrinkled, a veritable caricature of a woman, rose martyr-like out of the flames. Sitting in the dark, Gaylord reviewed one by one the colorless years of her life. If he could have recalled a single season, a month, a week, even, that she had been happy, it would have comforted him. Her life had been one long, slow sacrifice. For what? That her husband might have lands and mortgages? That Sara could write chapters on "Chemical Calculation" and from a cold eminence of intellect deride country funerals as "barbaric pageants"? That Altah's jade-and-amethyst eyes might look forth with an assumed weariness and wring the hearts of men with desires? That he, her son—Oh, he was worse than any of them! Blackmailer, extortioner, he was all that Altah had said. He recalled the jibes of the pert little gamins of the day before, he saw again the cartoon that had leered up at him knowingly from the first page of his newspaper, the scare-heads were once more burned into his brain. "The Net Slowly Closing Around Leonard Gaylord—"

And this was the Leonard Gaylord who had once believed himself capable of fine and wondrous things! God in heaven, how had he come to such a pass? The pity of it, the tragedy of it. Long after everyone else was in bed and the house had quieted down he sat—thinking. He wished that he were a woman that he might cry, pray, wring his hands, give way to hysterical outbursts. But the fountain of his tears had long ago dried up. Prayer on his lips would have been mockery.

What was done was done. He tried

to console himself with a favorite sentiment of his. "I do not control events. Events control me." He was the unalterable result of conditions, the product of overpowering circumstances. After the first shock of his grief had worn off he would see things in their proper light again. Just now he was unstrung, unnerved, upset. His affairs had reached a crisis. Threads were spinning tirelessly which he must pick up and gather together, fissures were opening under his feet, his machine was going to pieces. It was a fatal time to indulge in what-might-have-beens, to develop squeamish scruples, to discover at this late date that he possessed what is more or less of a nuisance to a man who would get on in the world—a soul.

After all, if the worst came to pass there were a dozen avenues of escape. He might cut his throat, for one thing. Then what force under heaven save habit and association chained him to his clashing, grinding city of shops and asphalt, of sky-scrapers and hurrying figures, streaming endlessly through the grimy streets, like the tides of colossal sewers? Far away, he knew, vaguely located as "south of the Line," under skies, rose-pink like the inside of gigantic sea-shells, were myriads of little heavens, islands of perpetual Summer where the Past is not and the long arm of the law never reaches and men go for one look, just one, and never come away again. Why not lose himself in one of the far corners of the world? Again, a special Providence which he called Luck had hitherto watched over his affairs, saved him from the consequences of blunders, removed obstacles from his path, what reason to believe it would fail him now?

A loud-tongued clock struck somewhere and he roused himself to a consciousness of his surroundings. The fire was out and the room was dark and cold. The patter of the rain had ceased. He rose stiffly, groped toward the window, opened it and leaned out into the night. The sky was covered with a light fleece of clouds through which peered down a weird moon and

a few pallid stars. Over the familiar scene of the garden and the muddy lane that merged into the main street of the town was cast a sickly bluish light. The winds had slunk away like beaten hounds. A musty odor of damp vegetation, unutterably disheartening, suggestive as it was of mildew and decay, came from the sodden earth. Gaylord raised his eyes complainingly to the indifferent stars, and a sudden loathing for the whole seemingly reasonless scheme of things shook him to his very heart's core.

"Mother," he cried in a low tone; and again, "Mother!" Then shrugging his shoulders as if to adjust them to an impossibly heavy burden, he shut down the window. As he stumbled across the room to his bed he knocked like a drunken man against the chairs and tables.

He tried to sleep. The clock kept ticking off the moments in an irritating monotone. He could hear the heavy breathing of someone asleep. At length he lapsed into a troubled doze, a miserable counterfeit of sleep from which he was awakened while it was yet dark by the loud whirring of an alarm clock in an adjoining room. Soon the opening and shutting of doors, footsteps and the sound of stirring throughout the house brought forcibly to his mind the fact that he, too, must make the early morning train. He rose, feeling as the condemned do on the morning of execution, and made his toilet by the light of an unshaded glass lamp. As he stood facing his belabored reflection in the mirror, and took note of the razor held in one ever-so-slightly shaking hand, a temptation came to make two or three quick slashes across his throat and have done with things.

But the mood passed. His manner, as he went downstairs, spoke to his father and tranquilly replied to the "good mornings" of other coated and suit-case encumbered guests, gave no hint of such a thing. As, breakfast over, he passed through the long hall on his way out, the door of his sister's room opened and Miss Gaylord ap-

peared on the threshold in a dark gray dressing-gown and slippers which her brother characterized to himself as "the color of iron." As he gazed at them abstractedly he was reminded of a line from the description of the Melancholia in "The City of Dreadful Night": "Her feet thick-shod to tread all weakness down."

"Ah, Leonard," she said in her formal, emotionless tones, "so you are leaving us? We haven't seen much of each other of late and I'm afraid we have little in common any more. But it is to be hoped we shall not altogether lose sight of each other. I shall appreciate an occasional letter."

She held out her hand and he took it. It felt hard and cold. "I *will* write," he promised. "'Pon my honor. When you're in the city come and see me. You know where to find me, of course. Mrs. Murray will make you comfortable."

Loud voices called to him that the surrey was waiting. He hastily bent and kissed her. "I must go," he said. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Leonard," she returned calmly.

He threw a single backward glance over his shoulder before he stepped out upon the porch; but her door was closed.

At the station there was more leave-taking, more hand-shaking. Gaylord helped get the women of his party aboard, found them seats, saw to it that they were comfortably settled and then took himself off to the smoker where he might meditate, secure at least from feminine interruptions. He burned with impatience for the sight of the morning papers, and when the boy at last came in with them he seized one with a trembling hand, anxiously scanning the pages for new developments. There were enough. The hounds had blood in their noses. "Confusion in the Ranks of the Grafters," he read. "Ex-President Collins of the Board of Public Works Reveals Many Secrets of the Administration." "Prosecuting Attorney Finch Declares Kennedy, Gaylord, Mayfield, Hayes

and Certain Others will be Under Arrest Before Month is Out." "Telephone Deal to be Probed to the Bottom."

Gaylord furtively wiped the sweat from his face and forehead and then lighted a fresh cigar. "Nothing in it," he asserted contemptuously to a second cousin of his mother who was stealthily eying him from the seat opposite. "All Finch's bray. I'll be under arrest before the month is out, will I? He'd better take care that before then he's not serving time in the pen for libel!"

Unconsciously he had raised his voice and the next moment was unpleasantly aware of having attracted the attention of every man in the car. Pale and fuming he entrenched himself behind his paper, doggedly reading it, until the train's many stops, the banging of electrics and the droning of automobiles warned him that he was entering familiar territory.

He alighted rather hurriedly and took a car which brought him within a few blocks of his house. He had there what he designated as a sort of "home office," and after he had apprised his servants of his arrival, it was to that room he first retreated. When he was away his Japanese boy had a habit of leaving his mail there; now as he entered, his eye was caught by a pile of letters and papers on his desk. He sat down and began to look them over. At the very bottom lay a bulky envelope encased in thick gray paper and ornamented with two or three stamps. As he slit the envelope a faint odor as of heliotrope was wafted to his nostrils and a couple of photographs, "snapshots," evidently, and three letters dropped out. Around them was a sheet of note-paper the color of the outside cover, upon which something was written. He took it up. It was a single paragraph without heading or signature.

I believe you have always held, [it abruptly began] that the man who poses as a "reformer" in politics, who makes no compromises, and who stands at any and all times for "pure politics," must not only be immaculate himself, but his brother, father, grandfather, even to the third and fourth generations, must be likewise immaculate. How has it

escaped you that Jerome Aldridge, the man who is paying Finch \$100,000 to conduct this prosecution, has a son, one "Babe" Aldridge, who was expelled from college in his junior year and whose crop of wild oats has cost his father a pretty penny and the end is not yet? I believe another favorite maxim of yours is: "Every man has his price; the difficulty lies in finding out his private mark." I think if you will examine these documents you can discover the "private mark" of Jerome Aldridge.

Gaylord read till he reached the last word. Then for a moment the room seemed to spin round like a top. His face turned scarlet. Luck, the golden-shod, had not turned her back upon him, after all! She was with him still!

Of course it was a woman who had done this thing. It was like a woman. There had been several of them in his life. It might have been any of them. Gaylord did not fail to read what was written between the lines. He simply chose to ignore it.

A street peddler bawled something, and he leaned forward as if his life depended upon getting the meaning of the cry. Finally he made out the words.

"O—oranges—twent' cents dozen—O—oranges!"

The photographs and the other letters lay just as they had fallen on the desk. He did not look at them for a long time.

A series of pictures was passing before his eyes. First came the darkened parlor of his boyhood's home. He saw it just as he had seen it yesterday. He stood gazing silently down at the withered face out of which all youth, all beauty, all light had been brutally crushed under the iron juggernaut of the years. He marked again the hands, gnarled, unmanicured, stumpy-fingered, folded on the flat, cold breast, speaking of toil, the closed eyes, dark-circled, telling of tears, the furrowed brow eloquent of pain. He was conscious of the air of sickening resignation, of awful weariness, of pitiful love-hunger that emanated from her like an accusation. Then the scene gave way to another. He was with Altah in his father's stuffy box of a "library." The scent that was the stolen lure of some strange flower troubled the

stagnant air of the ill-ventilated little room. He was looking into her angry face. "Blackmailer, extortioner, who are you to call me to account for my poor little misdeeds!" Now he was living last night over again. He sat in the room which only the fire-light lighted and heard once more the rain sweep against the closed windows with the soft swish of silk. The wind slapped it against the panes along with the lugubrious notes of the woman next door.

"Pa-rents and children shall be part-ed.
Parted to meet no more!"

Then all at once these shadow-scenes dissolved and he found himself staring blankly at the rows of calf-bound volumes that on shelves of oiled pine stretched in unpretending monotony around the room. He felt absently in his pocket for a cigar, but when he went to light it his fingers were so still that the match burned through till it scorched the flesh.

He threw it aside and spoke aloud to the closed door. "Mother," he said, "it is a strange thing that from a good fig-tree should come nothing but thistles. I thought I was different. But I'm—not. I'm like the rest."

His glance dropped to the photo-

graphs that lay face upward on the desk. A sardonic grin, as he looked, distorted his face. It deepened into a laugh, disgusted, triumphant, unspeakably disagreeable as he replaced the last letter within its worn envelope. With a vengeance luck had played into his hands!

He sat for a moment thoughtfully drumming his fingers. Then he reached for his desk telephone.

"Aldridge's office!" he called as soon as he secured the number. "Mr. Aldridge there? . . . Yes, please. . . . Hello . . . This is Gaylord. Yes, Leonard Gaylord . . . Yes . . . Could you arrange to see me at 2.30? . . . At your office. . . . Finch? No. I must see you alone . . . Very important . . . Coming right down. Good-bye."

He hung up the receiver. Catching sight of the gray envelope and its accompanying sheet of note-paper he tore them into bits and flung them into the waste-basket. The other letters and photographs he stowed away carefully in his breast pocket. He got into his overcoat and looked around for his hat. His face, as he went jauntily down the stairs, wore an arrogant you-be-damned expression that argued ill for Jerome Aldridge.



THE LIE

By Grace Duffield Goodwin

HOW brave the lie was as she flung it out—
Woman's poor shelter in her hour of need;
Blackening her lips with laughter none might doubt,
To keep her soul unspotted from the deed.

Not low enough nor mean enough to pay
Truth's awful price—lives twined within her own;
Oh, easier far, denying day by day
Her soul's high gods that thundered from the throne.

And when her time comes to be judged of this
By Him who sees life truly, sees it whole,
For His eye clean, and bare of earthly bliss
Stands one who dared to lie to save her soul!

THE CYNIC

By Eleanor Howard-Waring

SHE SPEAKS

NO, do not interrupt me—let me say all. Last night I was convinced of your love, and this conviction swept over me like a gale that bends a slender tree. During those moments I think you did love me. . . . Oh, yes, and now, perhaps, as you say, for after all, last night is not so very far in the past. You might love and be true to me for as long as a fortnight, or until some of the novelty of possession wore off, or until a prettier woman came. . . . My mind, as well? Then I shall say a brighter, prettier woman. . . . Yes, there are lots of them!

You see I am not a girl. I've lived, and studied men and women of many countries. In love they are all much alike.

My marriage was not a success—never mind why. It was years ago and seems scarcely more than an episode in my life, but it was long enough for me to learn something of married men and marriage vows, which seem but a matter of elasticity of conscience. . . .

Yes, I heard that your marriage, too, was—what shall we say?—*failure* seems trite, but so is marriage often.

In the beginning I had ideals—one has them in youth, you know—that only an angel could live up to. The young expect much that maturity knows never existed. The law freed me from these shattered illusions, and as a burnt child avoids the fire I have no ideals now, and I have never married again. . . .

Yes, I have become a doubter. . . . No, I would not trust you. Why

should I? With certain environments I would trust no one. . . . Hard? Perhaps. I have wanted for years to say all this frankly.

So long as you were under my personal influence you might easily remain true, but once let this relax and another woman come into your life, I would not give *that* for your faith to me! You are not to blame. Nature has endowed men with a desire for novelty—and much curiosity. When this is satisfied—like a bee forsaking the flower when the honey is sipped, they flutter to another blossom or even away to another garden. Strange to say, too, the heart that's most loving is too responsive to be responsible, if you can understand what I mean.

The only genuinely unhappy men I ever knew have been married men. I think it is the method of conducting the marriage relation. Too much exacting, too much familiarity. Some men are strong enough to defy the fate that blew over their house of cards. . . . No, when they are wise they know better than to attempt another such frail structure. . . . Some of them stand on the ruins and with their heads erect go on to the end and the world never knows. . . .

"What of the women?" Oh, it is all the same, men and women too. Only the woman, of course, is the greater sufferer because of the restrictions of conventionality and the impossibility of seeking outside diversions.

No, no, let us be friends. Marriage spoils friendship. If I did not already know, your arguments might seem strong, but I am quite determined to let my head govern my heart, and I know

your side so well. . . . Yes, I loved you last night when you kissed me. . . . no—no—don't touch me; that might make me think I loved you today! I wish to protect us both. . . . No, not even my hand, please. Last night when you carried me away by your eloquence and presence, by the strength of your manliness, I was overcome. The quality and intensity of my feeling left me exhausted. It seemed to me at the time that you defied every evil thing that perils love—inconstancy and unfaithfulness included. I had neither power nor inclination to resist you. . . .

Oh, but that was last night. The lights and the music and the odors of many flowers make such a difference. I was reckless under their spell. I forgot all the lessons I have learned by daylight, and sitting there beside you with your shoulder so close to my cheek and your arm flung over the back of the bench. . . . Once more, no, please, this is not last night, but today, and last night it was the arch tempter that whispered to us both, "Somewhere there are truth and love and faith, and you two can find them for the seeking."

Do you remember how the orchestra sobbed the tenor solo from "Cavalleria"? Let me play a bit of it, shall I? Just here beside you on the piano bench. I want to feel the spell again. . . . Is it not wonderful? Do you feel it too? But we must not. . . . Why? Because there is no truth nor loyalty in the world and we must not deceive ourselves. You see, the "atmosphere" is really gone today. The daylight is too prosaic and the piano—bah!—only violins can sway one truly. See, when I raise the shade high how garish the afternoon sunlight seems! . . . Well, close it if you like—it does seem rather blatant. Thanks. . . .

Yes, you may sit beside me again—but not so near—there is plenty of room, the bench is made for duets! And I can talk and think more clearly if you don't touch me. When you do I feel lost, for some reason, and I have a sense of helplessness and a desire

not to go on living but just to float into space with half-closed lids and relaxed senses. . . . You feel this too? I can scarcely believe it, men are so different. . . .

What I really crave is your friendship—a relation based first upon a mental attitude to each other. In my proper senses I do not love you. The music, lights, flowers, your caresses give a false glamour. I like you. You exhale a strength that stimulates me like a tonic. You give me hope and courage. Your firm mouth gives me a sense of power, your square shoulders seem to me a bulwark against the world, but above all it is your mind which I most admire.

Against all of these things I must guard myself. The tonic of today, which stimulates, was as intoxicating wine last night. You touched me, you crushed me to you and I gave myself up to a joy for which I thought I had lost the capacity. I am glad I can still feel so deeply, but I must let my head guide me. I postponed my answer until today, fearing to trust myself last night and knowing, even in the supreme moment, it would be different by daylight. Most of life is daylight. Music and palms and the subdued lights of a conservatory grow fewer and fewer as we grow older. That is all over. It is your mind today which I delight in—not your physical self. . . .

Oh, very well, I can hardly deny you expression, for you have been patient with me. But it will do no good. I am quite determined. . . .

Why do you pull the shade so low? The room is quite dim. . . . Yes, you may play, certainly. . . . Are you going to sing it? . . . Ah! . . .

HE SPEAKS

Do you mind if I go on playing as I talk? This "Cavalleria" thing seems to be a sort of *motif* with us. . . .

When I first heard you sing I realized the possibilities of love in you and saw your temperament. You were singing *Verborgenheit* and you almost whispered the words, as if you were afraid:

"Tempt me not, O world, again,
Lure me not with joys that perish,
Let my heart unspoken cherish,
All its raptures, all its pain—"

These harmonies are very interesting just here, I think. . . . Is not this a queer strain? . . . I had seen you the evening before for the first time. From the moment our eyes met I knew that this was to follow. I never resisted it. We had been in the same world all those years, and had known each other all that time, but we only met face to face two weeks ago.

I did not dream until last night that you cared. When I found that you did . . . Oh, yes, you cared—last night. . . . Never mind, the daylight does not make such a difference. Do you like *Délibes*? Sometimes there seems never to have been any other composer. Listen to this. . . . You see, Life only offered us the dregs the first time. Today you and I will fill the glass with glowing wine and drink together. . . . Yes, we will, for we are yet young enough, and blood flows quick in our veins.

Last night, with your violet-scented hair against my cheek, your warm, palpitating body against mine in your evening gown, your hand with its sudden, unhopèd-for clasp on mine and your lips so near . . . Go on playing? Very well, since I am not to touch! . . . I like to see you smile like that. I can't believe you are over twenty and your teeth gleam so white. . . . I did not think I should ever care to marry again until you came, and now I am as fresh and keen as a beardless boy. The

youthful longing for a mate sweeps over me.

We can be happy together, for our love is not founded solely upon physical attraction. We have each had a hard lesson and we know wherein we failed before. . . . Ah! you must let me finish—that is only fair, you know.

I can and would be true to you, for I would find in you always that infinite variety that makes association interesting. Your moods fill me with a desire to penetrate and respond as you would have me. When you are happy you irradiate happiness. I heard you laugh somewhere on the lawn yesterday. I wondered at your capacity for joy, but I laughed with you. When the gardener's wife told you of her suffering child your eyes filled with tears—but that was not all, I saw the doctor when he came at your request; he told other tales out of school, too. So you see I know you. . . . Yes, I know more than you think. You are not hard, you are not really cynical. I love you for all the things you are, not for the things you *call* yourself. . . . Please do not move . . . then I shall follow you. . . . Yes, lean there on the piano with the dusk falling outside and your face shining so white. Your hair is like a halo against the fading light. . . . No, you shall not go. . . . Yes, I meant to do it and I shall not ask to be forgiven. Can't you see and feel that you must never go? That you must stay here, in my arms, always, and that I must kiss you so . . . and so . . . forever?



COLLECTIONS SLOW

HIS WIFE—You have not been very successful in obtaining contributions.

THE MINISTER—No. Time may be money, but it's about the only kind I've been able to take up.

A WOMAN'S REASON

By Constance Farmar

I LOVE you for this, my dear—
When the Winter gloom was cold
You showed me the sunlight clear,
You gave me a hand to hold,
And righted my helm to steer.

I love you for this—you came
When the stars seemed afraid to shine;
The light of your life was flame,
A beacon that guided mine
And put all my fear to shame.

And whether 'tis right or wrong,
I love you the most for this—
The madness that made you strong
To seal my lips with your kiss—
And bind my heart with a thong!



YOUTH

By Thomas S. Jones, Jr.

I SHALL remember then,
At twilight time or in the hush of dawn;
Or yet, mayhap, when on a straying wind
The scent of lilac comes, or when
Some strain of music startles and is gone.
Old dreams, old roses, all so far behind,
Blossoms and birds and ancient shadow-trees,
Whispers at sunset, the low hum of bees,
And sheep that graze beneath a Summer sun.
Will they too come, they who in the yester-year
Walked in the same paths and in the first of Spring,
And shall I hear
Their distant voices murmuring?

I shall remember then,
When Youth is done,
With the dim years grown gray;
And I shall wonder what it is that ends,
And why they seem so very far away—
Old dreams, old roses . . . and old friends.

LE QUART DE VIN

Par Pierre Fontebride

PAS un bruit, pas un souffle, la nature était effondrée; du silence partout. Du silence là-haut dans les collines noires où, sous les grands pins desséchés qui sentaient leur écorce se fendre, pas un chien ne jappait; du silence là-bas au bord du gouffre rocheux où, sur les terrasses arabes allongées vers l'abîme, pas un coq ne chantait; du silence et du feu partout; du silence dans l'air, où le vent du sud lui-même s'était endormi et, pour mieux reposer, avait étendu la veille sa brûlure large et profonde parmi les granits rouges et tourmentés. Les astres flambaient énormes et roux, fourmillaient comme les étincelles sous la masse du forgeron, et sur les quartiers d'infanterie, tout en haut de Constantine, dans la transparence laiteuse de la nuit d'Afrique, la lune ovale versait dans les cours, entre de grands plans d'ombre, une clarté si mouvante et si frêle qu'elle semblait liquide.

L'aumônier de l'hôpital militaire ne dormit pas cette nuit d'août; son dur brodequin fit pleurer longtemps le gravier des allées du petit jardin derrière les infirmeries régimentaires, et lorsque minuit sonna à l'horloge vibrante des zouaves, le prêtre, étouffant un soupir, ouvrit une petite porte et, les poings enfoncés dans sa soutane, le front penché, à travers les allées désertes des casernes silencieuses sous leurs robes de chaux, à pas lents gagna la prison.

Oh! il ne les aimait pas, le vieil abbé, ces nuits lugubres où, dans l'ombre des cellules, il allait porter le mot du réconfort, l'adieu suprême aux condamnés à mort. Il pensait ainsi en marchant, lorsque soudain, derrière les quartiers des tirailleurs, la prison dressa tout haut

sa muraille aux joints géométriques et cimentés.

L'abbé heurta un portail; un mot d'ordre répondit au qui-vive d'une sentinelle, des gonds d'acier gémirent et tournèrent, et, derrière l'adjudant-greffier qui l'attendait muni d'un falot, le prêtre s'enfonça dans l'ombre épaisse des couloirs où s'ouvraient les cellules. Devant une porte grise, un groupe salua; l'adjudant posa son falot, fit jouer des cadenas, tira des barres criantes de rouille et, soudain, dans une bouffée d'air ranci, où la sueur et le phénol mariés en parfum gras saisissaient à la gorge, la porte céda.

Inondés et surpris par les rayons des lanternes, des cafards ailés se mirent à fuir en tous sens; repues et lourdes, des punaises interrompirent brusquement une manœuvre savante à rangs serrés; ignobles et velues, quelques araignées cherchèrent à la hâte dans les coins un refuge sur leurs pattes grêles, et, au fond, sur les planches inclinées, le torse et les pieds nus, le nez plongé dans le coude replié, un gamin de vingt ans dormait effondré dans cette vermine. L'abbé frissonna. Quel songe pouvait donc bercer cet être? A quelle vision cette lèvres désabusée pouvait encore sourire à l'heure où la réalité allait l'éveiller brutale et sanglante?

Il dormait pourtant. Il dormait si profondément que ni les pas lourds du géolier et du prêtre sur les dalles de pierre, ni le cri grinçant des serrures, ni la plainte aigre des verrous courant dans leurs gaines rouillées, ni même l'effluve lumineux lui frappant le visage, n'avaient pu l'éveiller; il fallut qu'un cabot de la chiourme le secouât rudement.

Alors l'homme étendit les bras, se

tourna, se frotta les yeux et, soudain, apercevant entre ses poings les galons de l'adjudant-greffier, un mouvement brusque le mit sur pied et lui fit prendre d'instinct la position du soldat sans armes. L'adjudant-greffier porta la main à la visière de son képi et, d'une voix grasse, se mit à lire: "Le général commandant la division fait connaître au chasseur... du bataillon d'infanterie légère d'Afrique que, par décision en date du... M. le Président de la République a rejeté le recours en grâce formé par ce chasseur contre l'arrêt du conseil de guerre qui l'a condamné à la peine de mort."

— L'exécution est pour ce matin, ajouta le greffier.

La lecture avait résonné lugubre dans l'air suant et chauffé du cachot et, la tête en arrière, les talons en équerre, les mains sur les coutures du pantalon, le joyeux avait tremblé de tous ses membres.

— Désirez-vous quelque chose? Voulez-vous M. le curé? reprit à nouveau le sous-officier.

Mais l'homme, livide, semblait hébété; ses regards terrifiés couraient de l'un à l'autre; enfin, ses mâchoires claquèrent, et, d'une voix à court de souffle, il jeta:

— Je boirais bien un quart de vin.

L'adjudant allait donner un ordre quand brusquement l'aumônier s'avança et, prenant l'homme par le bras:

— Habille-toi, lui dit-il.

Et aux autres:

— Il entendra la messe; le reste me regarde.

Un silence regna, durant lequel le condamné, après avoir fixé le prêtre, parut réfléchir, le front penché, puis, soudain, relevant la tête, répondit:

— Ma foi, je veux bien, j'm'en fous, si ça peut vous faire plaisir; mais vous me donnerez un quart de vin? ajouta-t-il, méfiant.

L'aumônier promit. L'homme passa sa capote et ses godillots, un gardien lui ajusta sa cravate et lui posa son képi, puis le groupe s'éloigna dans les galeries, où les falots balançaient leurs traînées d'ombre claire.

La chapelle modeste et pauvre éten-

daient son plafond blanchi sur un grand christ dont les bras ouverts frôlaient la lumière rousse des rayons vacillants des cierges, et devant l'autel de planches le prêtre officiait en robe de deuil. L'homme, entouré des gardiens, écoutait interdit et tortillait son képi pour se donner une contenance: une langue inconnue, des mots étranges vibraient à ses oreilles; mots qui s'étaient assourdis pour avoir trop crié leur rêve, mots qui avaient vieilli sur la route sans fin des siècles, mots qui s'étaient usés sur les lèvres des humanités naïves frémissant devant l'abîme, mais mots qui courbaient les fronts et touchaient jusqu'au cœur dans la majesté de leur rythme profond comme la voix des océans brisant leur immensité mobile sur les galets des plages; une seconde l'hostie étincela dans sa pureté neigeuse entre les doigts haussés du prêtre; puis ce dernier vint prendre l'homme par la main, le conduisit devant l'autel. Là, tous deux s'agenouillèrent, et le pater s'égrena en phrases hachées: "Notre père"—"Notre père," reprenait la voix du joyeux—"Sur la terre comme au ciel"—"Sur la terre, comme au ciel,"—"Pardonnez-moi comme je pardonne aux hommes," termina l'aumônier d'une voix sourde, relevant sa tête haute et blanche—"Comme je pardonne aux hommes," répondit en écho plaintif le soldat courbé dans sa capote bleue.

Alors, la prière finie, l'aumônier poussa vivement le joyeux dans la sacristie, le fit asseoir devant l'unique table couverte de drap sombre et, sans enlever son étole, courut à un placard, y prit un verre, du vin blanc, des biscuits et dit:

— Voilà mon vin de Pâques; bois et mange, petit.

Comme l'homme ne bougeait pas, le prêtre lui toucha l'épaule et reprit:

— Voilà ton quart de vin; bois, mon fils.

Un sanglot seul jaillit de la gorge de l'Alphonse, qui, se jetant dans les bras du vieillard, y balbutia en y cachant son front:

— Ah! si tous m'avaient parlé comme ça!...

Alors, le prêtre bouleversé serra sur son cœur cet être douloureux qu'on allait détruire, et, durant un instant, dans la même étreinte, tous deux vécurent la même douleur. Puis l'homme, à nouveau, s'étant assis, l'aumônier lui remplit son verre, y trempa les biscuits; le joyeux disait: "Merci, vous êtes bon." Le prêtre ne répondait pas, mais, comme un grand-père, faisait boire et manger le soldat. L'abbé avait encore mis des cigarettes sur le table. Le condamné, pensif, fumait sans parler. Et les étoiles commençaient à pâlir, quand retentirent dans l'ombre les masses des bataillons descendant des chambrées pour la parade; brefs et distincts, les commandements arrivaient jusqu'à la sacristie, la porte s'ouvrit, le greffier parut et le joyeux se leva. Une dernière fois, il contempla le front large et blanc du prêtre, lui prit les mains, puis sa voix trembla:

— Monsieur l'aumônier, dit-il, je suis sans famille et je possède soixante francs au greffe de la prison; le drap de votre autel est déchiré, je l'ai vu tout à l'heure; prenez cet argent: vous en achèterez un autre avec.

Puis ses lèvres frémissaient d'un dernier "merci," pendant que son regard s'alumait de ce reflet qui passe dans les yeux des bêtes quand une main amie vient de les caresser doucement.

Et deux heures après, sur la plaine des Oliviers, au pied du tertre où on en a tant tué qu'à toute époque l'herbe y

vient haute et drue, grasse, pleine de fleurs, mais maudite, car les chèvres n'y mordent pas et les oiseaux n'y jouent jamais, les reins brisés, les flancs crevés, le zéphyr s'était effondré sous les balles de la justice des hommes. La tête haute, face aux bataillons, il avait regardé bien droit quand le soleil était monté sur Mansourah. Il avait écouté encore sans frémir la sonnerie "Aux champs!" passer ardente, passer cuivrée, sur les zouaves et sur les turcos bariolés; puis un tonnerre avait grondé, et, les bras ployés, la face écrasée sur le sol, après le coup de grâce dans l'herbe éclaboussée, sa tempe ouverte avait donné à la terre bonne pour toujours le garder tout le sang de son crâne qui avait peut-être un filon d'or.

Chaque année depuis, si vous passiez à Constantine, la ville où tournent les corneilles, vous pourriez voir, la veille du 30 août, un vieux prêtre cassé cueillir à pas lents les bleuets et les lavandes sur le tertre funèbre des Oliviers. La récolte finie, le vieillard regagne les casernes avec sa gerbe parfumée et se dirige vers la petite église de l'hôpital. Là, sous l'unique ogive, il fleurit son modest autel, le couvre d'un drap neuf qui ne lui sert qu'une fois l'an, et le 30 août, au point du jour, lorsque les grands rochers de la ville de Salluste frissonnent au premier baiser de la lumière, le vieux prêtre cassé dit une messe et communie pour un mort.



AT THE BRIDGE CLUB

"THEY say Mrs. Gulpin is at death's door."
"Oh! oh! And she is such a beautiful player!"



FIRST POET—Where are you going to spend the Winter?

SECOND POET—Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in bed—waiting for my laundry.

THE SEAT OF POWER

By Johnson Morton

MRS. TROILUS TODHUNTER is a salient figure of my earliest memories. This may be an admission that definite impressions failed to lodge in my brain at a tender period, for I must have been fully eight at the time I saw her. Somehow I have never really believed all the things that people claim to recollect at distressingly undeveloped ages. I'm much more inclined to give the credit to such "aids to the memory" as grandmothers, nurses and rampant imaginations are all too prone to supply. For instance, there's a friend of mine who is fond of saying:

"My first remembrance of my mother is of a beautiful woman in a gown of brocaded yellow satin standing before a long mirror. She was fastening a diamond necklace about her throat. The jewels flashed in the lamplight. I lay in my cradle watching and admiring her, and after she had gone turned sadly to my bottle for solace."

Stuff and nonsense! I take no more stock in this than I do in its "companion picture" of the paternal order:

"My old black mammy held me up, a child of scarcely eighteen months, to the tall, bronzed man on horseback. He smiled gravely as he patted my cheek with his gauntleted hand. The bugle sounded. He dug his spurs into his charger's flank and rode off into the distance. I never saw my gallant father again; but, to this day, the touch of a glove brings back the scene to me!"

Really, now! I can't deal in rhapsodies of this sort! I try to be honest in my emotions, at least, and the result is a barren stretch of babyhood through

which, so far as memories are concerned, I might as well have slumbered.

So the figure of Mrs. Troilus Todhunter—I wonder if her first name was Cressida—leads my procession of definite remembrances, dominating and vital as a Valkyr! She it was, brief apparition of an hour, who unveiled to me the potency of woman's charm—rococo in her case, it must be confessed; in her I first felt the power of a personality; and it was her finger that pointed out to me (of course I speak metaphorically) the alluring figure of *Art* as it came lumbering over my empty horizon.

I had been snatched that Autumn from a small school where I had imbibed, at odd moments, desultory and ungraded learning from the vantage point of my teacher's lap. I had read several books of Virgil and grown rather prone to worship the classic gods. I knew the "Deserted Village" by heart and I believe I had written a poem myself, of the chastely imitative order, in praise of Ceres. But I *didn't* know how many shingles were required for a barn of ostentatiously simple dimensions, I *couldn't* carpet a room—on paper—"allowing for the jog," neither could I have named the rivers of Mesopotamia nor bounded the State of Maine. So my father—by the way, he rode no charger, nor did he handle with gloves—awoke suddenly to the mortifying fact that unless a change of base could help him he would have on his hands, instead of the evenly developed young Christian gentleman that his well-regulated soul craved, an ill-balanced, unpractical little Pantheist. My uprooting was the result. I can recall

vaguely the preliminary confab with the bald, near-sighted but impressive principal of "Macomber's Military Academy"; his ominous shakings of the head at my powers and my limitations—both over-developed. I shrank before the frankly curious eyes of forty boys as I took the seat assigned me in the "Classical Room," clinging gratefully to the near and comforting presence of Roddy Talbot, who had suffered the same sea change as myself and who occupied the adjoining desk. That doleful first morning offered one embarrassment after another. I found myself a Gulliver among giants in the Latin class, while I consorted with lisping toddlers in arithmetic. I was alternately elevated and depressed; a normal level seemed out of my grasp; that safe middle course which my favorite Æneas had been bidden to choose! Two thoughts alone buoyed me: the promise of military exercises at noon and the expectation of my luncheon, which, by the way, lay in my desk in a new tin box made to look like a book and labeled, somewhat inadequately, "Food for Thought."

At last the clock's hands stood at twelve; and Mr. Macomber, closing his book, called us to attention. The happy moment of military drill was upon us. I glanced at Roddy. He returned the look in kind. Our little backs straightened themselves. Instinctively we assumed martial attitudes. My, but this was going to be great fun!

Instead, Mr. Macomber's dull voice brought disappointment.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I am sorry that, owing to a lame knee, ex-Brigadier General Burke, late of the Nineteenth Militia, will not be able to organize the school battalion for a day or two. In place of the drill scheduled for twelve o'clock, you will devote the hour to another branch of discipline, very different, but perhaps of equal importance. Mrs. Troilus Todhunter, our amiable instructress, will meet the entire room in the chapel and elucidate some initiatory principles in the study of *Elocution*."

Roddy and I sat on the front settee. Before us, raised by a few steps from the floor, was a small platform in a recess. Upon it stood two straight-backed, red-seated chairs and, between them, a desk of ecclesiastical cut, on which Mr. Macomber was wont to lean heavily each morning and call down the sanction of heaven on his labors. Now it supported only a glass of water.

There followed a period of waiting so prolonged that the silence threatened to degenerate into laughter, judging by significant sounds from the rear. But a door at the side of the platform which had been for some moments shaken by an unseen hand, opened opportunely and there advanced into view a lady. It was Mrs. Todhunter herself!

She was thin, almost to attenuation, more than middle aged, but erect. She wore a dress of stiff brown silk that dragged somewhat behind and seemed reciprocally short in front. Over it yards of narrow velvet ribbon ran gaily in the fashion of the day. At her neck, clutching a ruffle of lace, was a medallion-pin, representing evidently the late Troilus in cameo, at once decorative and symbolic. From it fell a heavy gold chain which terminated in a watch at his widow's belt, giving the inevitable impression of a proprietorship over his valuables even beyond the grave! Mrs. Todhunter's eye was still bright, and she had evidently once been told that her well-carried head resembled that favorite one of Clytie. So she strove to bear out the likeness now, poor lady, in spite of her thinness, her wrinkles, and her dull hair, which, as the advertisements euphemistically put it, had "decreased in volume"! The remnant, however, was knotted bravely at the back and bore a white rose in its enfeebled coil.

She raised a slender hand for attention. Her many rings clinked against one another with the motion, as she stepped to the front of the stage and addressed us:

"My dear young gentlemen, we are about to begin the study of *Elocution*, one of the most important in the entire

curriculum; important not only for intellectual development and accomplishment; but, let me impress it upon you, important also for hygienic reasons. In my own case," she smiled and her tone grew confidential, "it has been of an inestimable value, for all my physicians assure me that I have," she paused an instant and her voice took courage, "but one *lung* and that enlarged to *twice* the size of woman's ordinary lung! Had I not taken up this practice of elocution-teaching, they further assure me," she slackened her vocal pace and colored her tone with melancholy, "long ago would I have been laid in my grave"—another pause that ended in a whisper of deep effectiveness—"and the daisies growing over me!"

Her bosom rose and fell with emotion, her lips parted widely in a smile; down her open throat, were one shameless, he might witness the birth of a tone!

She leaned against the desk for an instant as if to recover from the stress of feeling. Then her head nodded encouragingly and from her lips came straight to us the question:

"What is the *seat of Power*?"

The silence of the abashed ensued and forced her to find her own answer.

"It is the diaphragm!" said she.

"And what is the diaphragm?" Another question followed persistently.

No one knew; but my fascinated attention had caught her eye.

"Well, I will show you." Then she beckoned distinctly to me!

"Will that new little gentleman with the red cheeks come to the platform and place his hand upon my diaphragm?"

It was an awful moment. The gleam of Mrs. Todhunter's eye made obedience to the command inevitable. I hesitated: but I went! My reluctant brown hand, guided by her white one, lay for an instant firmly on the member in question. Suddenly it was thrown off. The movement was unexpected and delightful. Great is the power of a diaphragm that has been brought up to work!

I returned, flushed, excited, to my place. My example was contagious: it became epidemic and there followed

a period of much confusion. Each boy was tentatively testing his neighbor's "Seat of Power"!

The lady, smiling indulgently, waited for a few moments. She sipped some water daintily and wiped her lips with a lace pocket-handkerchief before she rapped for our renewed attention.

"And what does the diaphragm *control*?" she asked pleasantly.

Of course no one knew this, and Mrs. Todhunter, clearly a flower of the Socratic school, gave again her own reply. "Why, the diaphragm controls the *breath*!"

"Now, what we call *breath*," declared she, "is really just air, drawn gently through the nose to the lungs. Watch me breathe, young gentlemen." In spite of her confessed interior peculiarity, she swelled visibly and alarmingly before our very eyes. "I hold the breath here—with—what?"

"The diaphragm!" I shouted enthusiastically.

She nodded a gracious assent and went on: "The little boy with the red cheeks is right. I hold it with the *diaphragm* and then let it out, oh, so softly." Her faint smile parted her lips again; her bosom fell once more in time with the hand that marked the pace.

"And now, young gentlemen, let me see what *you* can do! One, two, *three*!"

There came a sound from forty throats as of an ebbing tide on a sandy shore.

"Ah! We must hold the breath once we have acquired it," she warned. "Now again. Better fortune this time. Hold it steadily, easily, tenderly. It should sound like the dying wind blowing among the pine-trees!"

The simile proved too much for us. We gasped, lost what breath we had imbibed, laughed loudly and stamped our eighty feet! Mrs. Todhunter sighed and looked grieved, but tactfully eliding this subdivision of her lesson, she swept on to the next, "Speech and Its Expression."

She stood firmly, "poised," she called it, and bade us do likewise, in a

position that suggested a nonchalant yet confident bird. Diaphragm, chest, breath, lips and even *lung* seemed each more eager than the other to obey her behest.

She began in a deep and serious voice—I believe that she called it the *orotund*; her very look was surcharged with sadness:

"Pale mourned the Lily, where the Rose had died."

This situation she took much to heart and seemed to assure us that never again could she view with any sort of equanimity a garden where these rival but sympathetic flowers succumbed.

Then, in a tone of pensive longing—and for this exposition she shook her head gently while her eyes grew dim and reminiscent and her voice shook a telling trifle—she mounted another vocal step:

"O that this lovely vale were mine!"

The meaning of this was rather difficult to make out. She evidently used "mixed emotions." There was an insinuation that by good rights the Vale in question *should* be hers, and a suggestion, almost a threat, that in case she did gain possession of it, something would happen in the way of a surprise. It was deliciously subtle!

The climax of what was clearly a trilogy of graduated exclamations required a long, deep breath. As Mrs. Todhunter took it impressively there flamed in her eyes a light of exaltation. She threw back her head. Her voice, pushed forth by a strong, an eager diaphragm, rose yet higher in thrilling cadence.

"Joy, Joy, forever, my task is done!"

This was very simple, as they say all great emotion must be. The meaning was on its face—just plain triumph, or perhaps relief!

Afterward little leaflets of selections were put into our hands and we followed her while she "rejoiced" and "rang bells" with the "men of Angiers," and begged us "pity the sorrows of a poor old man, whose trembling limbs

had led him to our door." She assured us with Ruth, making us for the nonce a roomful of little trousered Naomis—that *our* people should be *her* people, *our* God *her* God; and she was just on the point of conducting us to Lodore, with its varied waters, when a splash on my leaflet made me look down. Roddy Talbot was regarding me enviously. I seized my pocket-handkerchief and raised my hand.

"Please, ma'am, may I go out? I've got the nose-bleed," I said.

Do you know, I never went back again! When I got home that afternoon I found my little sister ill with scarlet fever, and, fearing the contagion, my mother kept me out of school. In the early Spring my father went to Europe on business for the Government and took his family with him. We lived abroad many years; in fact, all of what passes with me for an *education* was got there, and I did manage to learn just enough mathematics to crawl into college. So, sadly enough, I never saw Mrs. Todhunter again, though once I almost *felt* that I had. Why! 'twas only a couple of years ago! I was on a train going West and as we drew up in front of the dingy station in a little Colorado town, just opposite my window was a printed notice pasted on the wall. Its bright color caught my eye, I could read it easily. And this is what I read:

MRS. TROILUS TODHUNTER

Colorado's greatest Reader announces
a group of

"TONE IMPERSONATIONS"

this evening in the Town Hall.

She will be assisted by

MISS M. BERTHA BIDDLE, Skirt-Dancer

—AND—

MADAME IDA DOREMUS, Female Baritone.

Tickets, with reserved seats, thirty-five cents each.

For sale at Coffin's Drug-Store.

If the train hadn't been eager to get off I should, at least, have investigated this notice. I might even have stayed over twenty-four hours and gone to the show. Why! there *could* be but one woman of the name of Mrs. Troilus Todhunter unless the original had syndicated it, and that isn't likely at the price mentioned! Can't you imagine the rest of the pitiful story? The "practice of elocution-teaching" evidently hadn't been enough, after all, to

encourage that lonely *lung* to its double duty, and the Colorado air was to help out.

But does anyone know what "Tone Impersonations" are? I'm sure I don't and I'm dreadfully afraid that the audience in the varied town halls, where they are offered, won't stay to find out! Poor Mrs. Todhunter, poor lady, I'm sorry for you! I'd a great deal rather take my chances with the public as a skirt-dancer or even a female baritone!



THE LONDON THAMES

By Archibald Sullivan

MANY a king hath passed me by,
 Many a queen crossed over me;
 Many a ship hath sought my hand
 To lead it out to the open sea.

Many a day hath scanned my eyes,
 Many a light hath decked my breast;
 Many a soul hath sought and found
 The voiceless peace of my perfect rest.

Many a king I have loved and lost,
 Many a queen will come no more;
 Many a ship hath ne'er returned
 For the welcome kiss of my friendly shore.

Many a day hath said farewell,
 Many a light hath flushed and died;
 Only my dead are true to me
 And the cold embrace of my restless tide.



EMPLOYER—Have you any qualifications which make you think you will succeed as a chauffeur?

APPLICANT—Yes; I can see a policeman ten blocks away.

BATTY-CAKES

By Lulah Ragsdale

THE man in cap and riding-boots who had left his horse by the roadside and pushed his way through bays and beeches and ferns waist-high, in search of the famous Coldwater Spring, paused behind a clump of wild calycanthus shrubs.

The voice of a woman coming from the other side had stopped him—a young woman by the *timbre* of the voice; a poetical young woman by the words it spoke:

"Love comes jus' like the flowers that bloom in the night when you're not watchin' for 'em—now look, ain't that beautiful? I would put some red ones here if I had any—" The words sounded vaguely familiar to Willford King—as if he had previously lived through this episode. Some country girl and her rustic lover, he speculated; it seemed too bad to interrupt, but he was deuced thirsty and they had told him the spring was under one of those three white-blossomed magnolia-trees. He hesitated a moment longer, and the voice, more vibrant, more velvety than before, took up its original theme:

"I know a little song my mother used to sing about love. I'll say the words for you if I can remember 'em:

"Two souls with but a '—I'd give a pretty to remember the word in there—" (this in a very different tone from that in which the preceding part of the line had been recited) thought;

"Two hearts that beat as one."

"Ingomar!" by Jove! The little puss is a cute one. Where'd she ever see 'Ingomar'!"

His curiosity was too keen to let him turn back now. He must discover the

identity of this rural Parthenia of the South. He rattled the calycanthus branches, then, parting them, stepped through. He expected to catch the sheepish glances of two shamefaced lovers. Instead only one pair of startled eyes glanced up at him from a warm-flushed face. A girl in a limp white lawn sat alone on a fallen log, a long-necked gourd, golden-brown in color, with a garland of wild-flowers half-wound about it, in her hands.

"Pardon," said King in his most courteous tone; "did I interrupt? I thought I heard talking—I hope I have not—er—run anybody away."

The girl's face grew more embarrassed.

"It was—jus' me, tryin' to—to—say over som'hin' I heard once."

"The flower scene from 'Ingomar.'"

"How—how'd you know? Did you ever see it?" Her eyes were now wide with surprise and delight.

"A dozen times, I guess."

"A dozen! I saw it twict."

"In Brooktown?"

"Oh, no, in New Orle'ns. Fahther an' I went there when he was first taken sick, to see if the doctors could do anything for 'im, an' we went to the theatre that night. They acted 'Ingomar,' an' nex' day fahther said I could go to any of the matinees I wanted to. I said I'd go see Parthenia again: I knew none o' the others could be better'n that."

"And then you bought a copy of the play and studied it?"

"Oh, no, I jus' kinder remembered part. Could I have bought a book with all that in it?"

"Why, of course—'Ingomar' isn't

copyrighted. You can get it anywhere for fifteen cents."

"F-i-f-t-e-e-n cents!" It was as if she might have had heaven for that meager price and then missed it.

"I can have you a copy here in three days if you wish it."

"Wish it!" The flash in her eyes dazzled him.

"But—I haven't—the price here—with me. If you'd come up home—I am Rachel Weatherbee—Allen Weatherbee's daughter—but you don't live roun' here—anywhere?"

"I have been staying in Brooktown for a week—" He drew a card from a card-case; the engraving was heavy enough to scratch one's finger.

"Mr. Willford King," she murmured, reading it.

"I've bought stock lately in your Mississippi Lumber Company, and I came down to look at the mill. My home is in New York—I'll wire a friend tonight for the play—and when it comes, if I may be allowed, I'll call with it."

"Oh, will you?" She was trembling with excited pleasure. "I'll have the money."

He bowed gravely, as if fifteen cents was a matter of consideration to a metropolitan bachelor with an inherited fortune of a million or so and a sense keen for chances to double it. But in all his twenty-odd years of discovering and chasing and capturing beautiful women, Willford King, now quite forty, critical and nearly blasé, thought he had rarely found a more remarkable one than this Southern country girl with an eye in which the light glowed like a spark in dark wine, a carmine-centred cheek and a wonderfully rounded form. She had wakened his tired fancy.

"Won't you repeat that scene you were rehearsing when I came up?"

"Oh—I couldn't—befo' you!"

"But when you've studied the play you will? Perhaps I may be able to help you—suggest some things—you know: I have seen it so many times."

"Will you do that? I'll be so much obliged."

"We can read it together. Why not come back here? We shouldn't want people hearing us."

"No, that's why I always come to the woods."

"Then I'll bring the play here to you—say, Thursday afternoon. I know it will have arrived by that day."

"An' I'll bring the money."

King mounted his horse and rode on toward Brooktown. As he went he laughed to himself with a queer soundless mirth: "To think of Willford King conducting a dramatic school in the wilds of darkest Mississippi! It'll make a good story at the club when I get back."

Rachel Weatherbee, radiant and excited, hurried home. The farm-house she approached was unpainted, but age had ripened it to a soft brown, to which a riotous "Lady Banks" rose-vine, fluffy with clusters of pale yellow roses, gave a harmonious touch of color. A hedge of cape-jessamines, set about with their regular, wax-white blossoms, bordered the walk from gate to porch. Crêpe myrtle trees seemed to surround the place with clouds of rose and white. Rachel ran up the steps. In an antique, rawhide bottomed rocking-chair on the porch, sat an old man with skin white as dressed kid and hair like fleece about his face. A pair of brown eyes, pathetic but trustful, turned gladly to the girl.

"Didn't get lonesome, did you, honey?" she asked tenderly. "What you want for supper? Reckon you'd like some batty-cakes?"

"Yes, I would, honey; they're jes' what I been a-longin' for!"

"'Twon't take long to gratify *that* longin'. Will you stay out here till they're ready, or come sit in the kitchen with me?"

"I'll go along with you."

"I'll tote your stick. You don't need it with me." She put a strong hand on his arm and helped him to rise. He shook and quivered like a silver poplar leaf in a wind. He had shaken and trembled like that since the afternoon he had come in from the

field and found Rachel's mother dead in her chair. The doctors had pronounced it an incurable nervous affection likely to grow worse until it ended in complete helplessness, then death. The state of helplessness had almost arrived.

They went into the kitchen, he leaning upon her arm and tottering with every step. Sitting in the calico-cushioned chair by the window he watched her break the eggs and beat the golden batter, while a dreamy look crept into his eyes.

"Yo' arms are jes' like yo' mother's ust to be, Rachel—when we was first married; an' ev'ry move you make is th' fac-similum o' hern. She made batty-cakes fer supper the night after we wuz married an' come here to live. I've loved 'em ever since. Lor', I never will f'git how she looked; her sleeves rolled up—I hadn't never seen her arms bare to th' elbow till then—an' I couldn't hardly keep from kissin' of 'em. An' how them batty-cakes smelt a-fryin'! No flower a-bloomin' outside could compare to 'em—yourn smells jes' like 'em."

"I'm glad I make 'em like hers."

"You're the onliest one who can. I ain' never tasted any like hern but yourn."

Night after night for two years this scene and this dialogue had been repeated, but Rachel had always managed to infuse enthusiasm into her part of it; the old man needed no effort to make his interest spontaneous.

Rachel went to the Coldwater Spring on Thursday afternoon, her heart beating with suspense. Would he come, this great, rich visitor from New York, or had he forgotten an hour after he had left her? If he had remembered, could he get the book? She had the fifteen cents tied hard and fast in a corner of her handkerchief. Her white lawn dress was fresh and crisp, for she had washed and ironed it herself yesterday.

She parted the red-rosetted calycanthus branches, and—joy beyond anticipation!—he was already there, sitting on a log, a yellow paper-covered book open in his hands.

"Well, Miss Parthenia, here are your lines—all of them."

"Did you re'ly get it?" The girl took the play as if it were a marvelous thing that might break or melt away at her touch.

She forgot to sit down. Her eyes were fastened to the pages and her cheek burned.

"Oh, I remember this part now, and just how she looked when she said it:

"Farewell, sweet dreams,
And once the future lay so bright before me:
There shone the scarce-formed hope, the
mystic joy.
Let all be fancy. Parthenia wakes to duty."

King looked on and listened—looked more than listened, it must be mentioned. It was his belief that beauty needed no tongue; nor brains, nor soul, as for that. Women's lips were not made primarily for speech. When Rachel finished, however, he clapped his palms:

"Good! good! none of them ever read it better."

She returned to consciousness of reality—and him.

"Here's the price, and thank you so much." He took the money gravely.

"If you will come back when you have studied it and let me hear you—"

"I hate to ask you to put yo'self out so."

"Not at all, not at all. It will give me a great deal of pleasure, I assure you, to er—be of some little service to you. Shall you be ready tomorrow?"

"No—I must bake cake tomorrer for Sunday. Some day nex' week—Tuesday—I'll come. I got to go back now. Thank you, sir, so much!"

There was no enthusiasm put into the batty-cakes that night. The flour-sifting and the egg-beating seemed trivial and irksome. The monotony of every movement struck drearily across Rachel's senses. Her eyes ached for the unread pages of that play that had dominated her dreams for nearly two years. Her whole being yearned to throw itself into the scenes of Parthenia's romantic life, as that lovely woman upon the stage had done. For

the first time the old man's oft-reiterated reminiscences annoyed her. She hurried through the little supper with scarcely a word for him.

But she did not go to the spring on Tuesday and Willford King was disappointed. He went on Wednesday and found her there, the brown-gold gourd already in her hand.

"I know it all!" she greeted him. "Fahther was kinder sick yestiddy, an' I wouldn't leave him."

"I knew you'd know it: genius never does things by halves."

"I'm not a genius, you know I ain't, Mr. King. Sounds like you're makin' fun of me when you talk that a-way."

"My dear girl, do you think I *would*—*could*? You have the divine fire—I am sure of that." He would have liked to talk more of personal and intimate things, but she turned at once toward the play. He took the book from her hands.

"Do the flower scene for me. Tell you what—I'll be Ingomar—only I'll have to read my lines."

Parthenia wound wild violets and white-starred turkeyvines about her long-necked gourd, while Ingomar lay at her feet and strove to put the barbarian's naive curiosity concerning love into his superwise voice.

"Now the dagger scene. This is immense. I believe I'll take to the profession myself. '*Parthenia, thou art mine!*'" He suddenly threw his arm about her and crushed her to his breast. With one blow so fierce as to send him staggering back, the girl freed herself and stood facing him with scarlet cheeks and angry eyes.

"Don't you do that again—don't you do it!"

"But Miss Weatherbee—that's in it—that's part of the scene—that was only acting. Didn't the actor you saw on the stage do that?"

"But we ain't actin' sure 'nough—we're only pretendin' to be actin'. You oughtn't to have done that, Mr. King."

"I am sorry—I am, Miss Rachel. I was carried away by the part. I forgot we weren't really acting—I won't

forget again. You'll forgive me this time?"

The remainder of the play progressed rather soberly; a good deal of the zest had gone out of it for Willford King.

He sent for other plays for her—"The Lady of Lyons," "Galatea" and "Romeo and Juliet." This last so captivated her that she came every day to read it with him and have him tell her of various noted actresses he had seen in the part. Willford King never gave up a pursuit, and he was now at that stage of the chase where fleeting hope of possessing the game filled every sense of the hunter.

"Look here, Miss Rachel," he said one day when some weeks had gone by and it was really time that he should be in New York again, "aren't you going to do anything with this talent—this—er—pardon—beauty of yours? It's a crime to waste it out here. Don't you mean to go on the stage?"

"How can I? Why, how can I? I ain't ever been in a theatre but twict."

"Come to New York and study in one of the dramatic schools. They will show you what you can do."

"I haven't the money, an' if I had, there's fahther—I wouldn't leave him long for nothin' in the world—though Cousin Calline Billups is with us now and I reckon she'd be glad to live at our house—she ain't got any real home since she got mad with Uncle Elleck's folks. But what's the use thinkin'—we just can make a livin' off o' the place since fahther had to rent 'stead o' fa'min' it himself."

"You might borrow the money and pay it back when you begin to act—you know the stage pays well. Why, I'd be delighted to lend it to you—let me be the means of giving the world a new star."

"Are—you—in—earnest? But fahther! An' I'd hate to borry—we never borry."

"Don't think of that; it's done every day in business—and this is purely a business matter—a sort of investment of mine. You could pay back with interest—successful actresses make a

world of money. Let me talk to your father."

"Oh, my poor honey!"

"But there's Cousin Calline. And what you could do for him in a few years when he will be needing it badly! The best doctors in the world who might be able to do something for him—a beautiful, comfortable home—every luxury."

The matter was broached in the most carefully chosen words by King. The palsied old man fell to trembling more violently than ever as he listened.

"Rachel go away from me—from home—to New York—t' stay?"

"You'd not be parted long. You would come to her as soon as she got started. She'd likely get an engagement in one of the big stock companies and live in New York."

"Me leave—ole Missip'? My fahm?—this house that we come to when we wuz married, her mother an' me? Yes, I mought," he suddenly changed, for he saw the light go out of his daughter's face. "I mought. Ole men ain't like ole trees what can't be re-sot. There ain't nary a root t' my heels." He even chuckled, but Rachel heard the catch in the end of the laugh, and her happiness was never afterward free from the echo of it.

"For seeing sights, Mr. Weatherbee, New York's the place. Why, you'd get young again. Then the fine physicians there—"

"Yes, but there ain't no hope—leastways—sump'n mought help me."

"I know it! I know it!" said Rachel with conviction.

"An' you'd look after my little girl like a father?" To the world-ignorant old Southerner the twenty years' disparity between King's and Rachel's ages seemed to make a century's difference between their feelings.

"Like a big brother—like a father—like a grandfather," answered the man of the world. As he rode home later he murmured to himself: "Trust to New York to do the rest for me. I've seen the glitter of 'the great white way' bedazzle too many old-fashioned consciences. When beautiful Rachel

Weatherbee's a show-girl in some metropolitan production—"

That night Rachel hung over her father. He was full of her plans. He lauded Willford King to the skies; he shed tears over his generosity and kindly notice of his little girl. And that little girl was almost persuaded that to go was the right and only thing for her to do—that Providence itself had offered this opportunity. She grew buoyant and excited again. She blotted off her mental canvas the half-framed pictures of the little house with only sour, deaf, precise Cousin Calline to make life for the broken old man. She permitted only golden-tinted views of the future, showing her a successful actress and her father again her cherished care.

Willford King went about on the day of the departure with gay expectancy quickening his every movement. He was to leave for New York that night with Rachel Weatherbee in his charge. The knowledge almost excited him, and he reveled in that long-unfelt sensation. The girl had cleaned and pressed her last Winter's half-cotton garnet Henrietta, and the little old leather trunk that had been her mother's wedding chest was nearly packed.

Cousin Calline was to prepare the old man's supper for the first time that night; Rachel was too busy with her own preparations to do so. She was in her room getting together her freshly ironed handkerchiefs and collars. The sun was setting. Its smoldering glow glinted the bronzed oaks in the grove beyond the house, and fired to pyres of blazing crimson the flowerless crêpe myrtles in the yard. The girl moved about with feverish haste. She dared not stop to think or look about her. As she had come in an hour ago from a last run down to the Coldwater Spring and seen the trembling white figure in the chair on the porch, something had smitten her to the very heart, and she had not dared even to stop and press a kiss on the white hair or the parchment-like brow. With a forced smile and a wave of the hand

she had run into her own room and begun gathering together the last of her poor little wardrobe.

The sun was now down and the house was gray and still—deathly still! She distinctly caught the sound of the first egg. Cousin Calline cracked in the kitchen, the first whip she gave the batter for the cakes. She wondered if her father had gone to sit in the kitchen, and if Cousin Calline's scrawny arms in any way recalled the first Rachel's as they had looked on her wedding night. She had a hundred things left to do and tried to put her mind again upon the doing of them, but those preparations in dining-room and kitchen would come with startling distinctness, distracting her mind. Now Cousin Calline was lighting the lamp, now setting the table, now going out to lead her father in. She paused in suspense: was the slender woman strong enough to support him? She heard the fumbling attempts to raise him from the chair. Cousin Calline grew impatient and querulous over it, hurrying him with sharp suggestions. Rachel started out with a reproof upon her lips—but stopped. What was the use? Tomorrow evening the fractious home-maker would have her way with the helpless old man. The girl pressed her fingers over her ears as the slow and tottering steps came down the hall. When she removed them she heard the spatter of the first spoonful of batter on the hot griddle. Her father always sat at the table and waited for his cakes to come fresh and hot to him.

Rachel involuntarily paused. There had always come a moment of suspense as the first cake bubbled and hardened and then under her deft touch turned over a beautiful, delicate brown. But what was that she smelled? Scorched batter! Oh, it was burned—burned! Cousin Calline did not understand; she was burning the batty-cakes! She would burn them every night. She was old and stiff and getting blind, and the thing that gave her father most pleasure and comfort in life would be spoiled for him. Rachel flung the

collars she had so carefully starched and ironed that day upon the floor and sprang out of the room. The kitchen was full of grease-scented smoke.

"Oh, you're burnin' the batty-cakes, Cousin Calline! Give me the turner!" She forgot the fresh garnet gown. Quickly she removed the smoking griddle and put another on; deftly she greased it, dotted it with spoonfuls of yellow batter and with a magic touch turned the first cake—a perfect mushroom brown—upon its other side. The sweet aroma floated into the little dining-room where the old man waited at the table. Then as she was lifting the hot cakes one by one to a plate and larding them with golden butter, Willford King stepped into the doorway.

"Why, Rachel, you aren't cooking supper tonight? The carriage is at the gate. Have you everything ready?"

"No—I ain't got everything ready, Mr. King, 'cause—I ain't going."

"Aren't going!" King repeated the words in a half-dazed, half-infuriated tone. "What blamed foolishness is this? What joke are you trying to play on me?"

Old Allen Weatherbee had heard and astonishment had given him strength to totter to the kitchen-door. Cousin Calline strained her deaf ear to hear.

"I've changed my mind. I ain't goin'. She can't take care of him. She ain't strong enough and—she burns his batty-cakes. She can't see 'em, nor turn 'em. I'd rather make him com'fable an' happy the rest of his life than be the greatest actress on earth—ân' I ain't goin'."

King stood and glared at her for a moment, his face a study of baffled rage.

"Well, you've made a pretty fool of me!" he said and suddenly turning, went out the door and clanged the gate behind him.

"Come, honey, eat 'em while they're light and hot," Rachel cried as she heard the carriage rolling away down the hard road. "Ain't they a pretty brown? I never in all my life was so happy a-fryin' your batty-cakes."

A DIPLOMATIC ERROR

By Mabel Cronise Jones

"**W**HY don't you confess, Bobby?" Mrs. Ordway spoke languidly from the depths of her steamer-chair.

Her brother dropped his glasses and turned toward her good-naturedly.

"I'm always willing to oblige you, Lucia; but just what are you driving at?"

"Don't underrate my powers of penetration! It was not pure solicitude for my health that started you off on a yachting cruise at this season."

Winthrop picked up his glasses again and scanned the horizon. "Don't be foolish, my dear."

"I suppose that means that you will not tell me anything, but I think, Bobby," with a softly cajoling inflection, "that you might trust me. Who is she?"

There was a long pause, while the anxious look on Mrs. Ordway's face deepened.

"You really want to know?"

"Yes."

"Marian Stanhope!"

"Marian!" Mrs. Ordway's face cleared as if by magic. And she had been imagining all sorts of disgraceful entanglements! She should have known Rob better.

"I am perfectly delighted, dear," she said warmly; "I don't understand you in the least, though. How do you expect to overtake Marian in your yacht, when she is flying across Asia by rail with the Lewises, and if—"

"She is not with the Lewises, Lucia."

"She sailed from San Francisco with them; they were—"

Winthrop dropped into a chair beside his sister and leaned forward, his

chin on his folded hands, his eyes on the far-off skyline.

"That was the plan straight enough, dear, and I thought at the time that it was not half bad. It might give her time to get the proper perspective of things. You see, she came out of college with all sorts of high ideals—and two years in our set have been—well, rather disillusionizing."

Mrs. Ordway drew back indignantly.

"I really think, Rob—"

"No sense in getting angry, my dear. You and Fred have managed to keep decent and haven't found affinities elsewhere. But you are the shining exception. Mrs. Layton finds Kirkbridge wherever she goes. Everyone connives at it. A hostess wouldn't dream of inviting one without the other. Then there's Raymond's wife and—"

"I know, Bobby; it is too horribly true. But what has it all to do with Marian?"

"A lot, unfortunately. She grew more disgusted and intolerant every day. Lost faith, you know, in everything and in everyone. But the thing that dashed all my hopes was the Mayhew affair. We had always supposed the Frank Mayhews a little better than anyone else—a sort of oasis in the social desert. So when Alice Mayhew ran off with that chauffeur—"

"It was unspeakable! And there were two of the sweetest children! What could have possessed her?"

"I give it up," Winthrop replied moodily; "the whole thing is beyond my comprehension. I had had hopes of winning Marian up to that time. I was ready to do anything she wished—go into settlement work or take

up any other scheme. I talked my best, Lucia, and my best isn't so very bad. It really meant life or death to me in a certain sense—"

"And she wouldn't listen?" Lucia Ordway's voice was wrathful. "She needn't have been so unjust! Couldn't she see that you were different—"

"I really can't blame her. She had almost consented to an engagement when the Mayhew affair occurred. Marian was so horrified and sickened that she never wanted to see New York again. The Lewises were going abroad for an indefinite time, and on the spur of the moment she joined them."

"And you couldn't dissuade her?"

"I didn't try very hard. In fact, it seemed to me about the best thing she could do. Over there things would readjust themselves. She would get her mental equilibrium again, and come to see that there were some fairly decent people in New York, after all. By-and-bye I meant to join them. Lewis and his wife knew the whole story—they were to tell me when to turn up. There would be hundreds of chances for a fellow off there—everything would be unconventional and romantic—no hothouse atmosphere, you know, to rouse Marian's antagonism."

"Well!" in her excitement Mrs. Ordway leaned forward and seized her brother's arm; "the plan was good, Rob! Did you get impatient?"

"I was impatient, of course, for there was no engagement—Marian wouldn't listen to any sort of an understanding. But that was not the point. I could have waited. I had too much at stake to risk anything by undue haste. But when they reached Japan Dr. Stanhope came up from Nafeka—"

"He's that missionary?"

"Exactly. By some cursed streak of ill-luck he had chanced to receive Marian's letter asking him to meet her in Japan. Well, don't you see? Here was her uncle brimming over with enthusiasm about his work among those dirty, filthy, treacherous islanders, and here was Marian, disgusted with our modern civilization—longing for a

simple life and real work—you can guess what happened."

"Rob! you don't mean that she—"

"That's just what I do mean," Winthrop said grimly. "She left the Lewises—they couldn't very well hold her by main force—and she went with her uncle to that vile hole which ought to be blotted from the face of the earth. Lewis let me know at once, and I started off. I asked the Wardwells to come because Dick can talk so many of those South Pacific lingoos." There was a strained, weary look on Winthrop's face which touched his sister.

"My poor, dear boy!" she said warmly; "the whole affair is outrageous. Couldn't Marian see that you were clean and wholesome and decent?"

"She had had some rather hard jolts," Winthrop returned quietly; "she left college with faith in everyone. That first year Turner ran off with an actress. He hadn't been married two years, either. The Hawthorne scandal followed on top of that. One thing after another cropped up, and at last Marian was ready to cut us all."

"She should have had more sense. I—I wish that you had told me before. Perhaps I could have helped a little."

"I think not; but perhaps you can be some comfort to her now—if—if things turn out all right."

"Are we actually headed for Nafeka, Bobby? Do you mean to kidnap her?"

"I shall not bring her away unless she is perfectly willing to come, but neither shall I come without her if I stay there for the rest of my life."

"Dear boy, don't you know that you are injuring your chances now? Let Marian have a year on her island; then go for her."

"Good God, Lucia! you don't realize what you are saying! She may be dead now as we talk of her. Those natives are the lowest, foulest beings that the Almighty ever put breath into. I daren't sleep any more—I have such horrible dreams. I see her—" He stopped abruptly. His forehead was covered with big drops of moisture and his lips closed in a hard, tense line.

Lucia's eyes filled with sudden, scorching tears. "I could not understand before, dear, why you looked so worn and thin. I am sorry, so sorry about it all, Rob! but aren't you needlessly anxious? Dr. Stanhope has lived among the creatures for fifteen years. They have never harmed him. He must have a tremendous influence—"

"The situation has changed radically, Lucia, within the last few weeks. One of the largest commercial houses in London has had a sort of sub-station on Nafeka. Half-a-dozen Englishmen were there all of the time gathering in stuff from the adjacent islands. Their boats touched there at least once a month. Now the firm has abandoned that station. Got a new one further south."

"Yes—?"

"Wilson—he's the Eastern manager for the concern—tried to make Stanhope leave when the station was shifted. He told him the facts in the baldest English, and what he knew was enough to curdle your blood. Stanhope was not the first missionary to locate at Nafeka. Others had tried it before Wilson established a station there. They all met with 'accidents.' Wilson wormed the truth out of one of the natives. Those men had been boiled alive, hacked to pieces, fed to the sharks! All that had saved Stanhope was the presence of that handful of Englishmen with their generous supply of ammunition. But Stanhope wouldn't listen. He talked a lot of rot about his 'children,' and their trust in him." Winthrop clenched his teeth. "The man is a blatant imbecile!"

"But, Rob, surely, you believe that he is doing a grand work?"

"See here, Lucia, the Almighty gave us judgment and common sense. I take it that he meant us to use them. I believe in Christianity with all my heart. It is the fundamental thing which makes life worth the living. But you might as well talk Hebrew to those wretches as they are today, as try to teach them the principles of our religion. They don't know what truth,

morality and honesty mean. You can't hammer those ideas into their brains. They are a hundred times more brutish and beastly than my horse. You've got to begin at the base of things, I tell you; and unless you've a warship back of you and a consul near by with plenty of sand—"

"Don't you believe in missionary work at all?" his sister gasped.

"I don't believe in trying to put up a tower before you've laid the foundations of the building. And aren't we told not to cast pearls before swine? My metaphors may be mixed, but my ideas aren't. I know what I think about this whole matter. Last Fall Marian and I were doing a little quiet slumming. We ran across Kate Northrup; she's a College Settlement woman—rich, you know, and I always supposed her bright—"

"Why, of course she's bright, Bobby. She's the smartest girl I know."

Winthrop shrugged his shoulders. "Then the intelligence of your friends must be far below normal. The day we saw Miss Northrup she was lecturing the women in one of the tenements on cleanliness. They must bathe daily. They must see that each child took a daily bath. They must use plenty of water in washing the dishes and in scrubbing the floors—"

"Why, of course, Rob! The poor can at least be clean. I should have said exactly what she did."

"Should you? She was there and knew the conditions. Now listen. Some of those women lived up four and five and even six flights of narrow, rickety stairs. The only water for the entire tenement came from a hydrant in the yard that gave out a miserable, weakly flow. Now be honest, Lucia! How many pails of water would you have carried up six flights of stairs? Would you have had either the time or the strength to carry out Miss Northrup's injunctions?"

"No, I wouldn't," Mrs. Ordway confessed frankly; "but I didn't suppose that there were any such tenements any more—"

"Hundreds and hundreds of them."

"It is awful, Rob, to have people herded that way. No wonder they become criminals!"

"We practically force them into crime by not allowing them to live like decent human beings. Kate Northrup has plenty of money. I told her to use some of it in practical philanthropy. Let her build some decent tenements. Have water on each floor; plenty of light; some modern ventilating shafts; a little cheap wall-paper, a few civilized conveniences in the kitchen. Then if she wants to talk cleanliness she can—only she will not need to do it then. You can't ignore conditions and surroundings, Lucia. 'Tis a wonder that some of those women don't throw their visitors out when they talk such rot as Kate Northrup and her ilk do."

"I see, but—just what has that to do with Nafeka?"

"It seems to me that the one place where people think that judgment and common sense are not needed is in matters of religion. I don't think Christ taught any such doctrine, though. Just as you needn't preach cleanliness to those tenement creatures until you give them the proper facilities for keeping clean, so, I say, there is no use in preaching the Gospel of Holiness and Purity to brutes until you have the power of making them realize what holiness and purity are."

"But Bobby—"

"Of course, if you have a battleship within hailing distance, or a garrison of soldiers at your command, you can go to work on the children and in the course of several generations you may make some faint impression. I'll tell you honestly that I don't believe there are many tribes outside of interior Africa as degraded as these Nafekians. Stanhope is casting pearls before swine. They don't comprehend the A B C of his teachings. He thinks that he has made converts, but he hasn't one who really grasps the simplest truths that he has spent his best years trying to teach them. At home, among our foreigners, he could have been a power for good—"

"Rob, you are awfully unorthodox,

and—and what you say seems positively sacrilegious."

"Does it? I am sorry, but I am sure that I am right. My dog there has more intelligence, more loyalty, more 'soul,' if you choose to put it so, than those wretches. The General would die for me at need without a whimper, wouldn't you, old fellow?" Winthrop looked steadily into the eyes of a huge St. Bernard, which had roused at the mention of his name; "It is a beastly shame, Lucia, even to mention the General in the same breath with these creatures. You cannot teach them honor or nobility or manhood or any of the fundamental essentials of religion and civilization. They are so unspeakably vile that Wilson couldn't find adequate words to describe them. And Marian is at their mercy now!—I can't think of anything else day or night, and—"

"But, Rob, they will not dare—"

"Oh, they'll dare fast enough, only they'll wait a bit so as to have the matter appear accidental. They've learned diplomacy if they haven't learned decency. Nafeka belongs to England, you know, and before Wilson left he hammered a few cold facts into the head of the native ruler. He thought a lot of Stanhope and he was sick at the thought of leaving him there. He tried to imbue the beasts with an idea of Stanhope's importance at home. He vowed to bring pestilences and curses upon them all if anything happened to Stanhope—"

"And you think—?"

"That Wilson's threats will make them behave for a while. 'Twon't last, and he knew it. I have been crowding steam hoping that we may get there in time—but the awful dread is making me old—"

He rose abruptly and walked to the further end of the yacht. Mrs. Ordway's eyes followed him wistfully. It hurt her to see Rob suffer.

II

WHEN the *Esmeralda* finally steamed into the wonderful natural harbor of

Nafeka, there were some on board who saw no charm in its tropical, scintillating beauty. Despite the warmth of the climate, Lucia Ordway shivered as she glanced at the opalescent sands, the vivid, intense greens of the foliage, and the low-browed, thick-lipped natives, stretched lazily in front of their huts.

Her lips were pale and her eyes roamed restlessly up and down the island. Perhaps they were too late—! Then a stifled cry from Winthrop—the flash of a white dress among the palm-leaves—and Marian was waving her hand to them!

Hours later Winthrop had a chance for a quiet talk with her. Stanhope was giving the rest some enthusiastic details of his work. He was boyishly energetic and trustful. Marian sighed as his voice drifted to their ears.

"Uncle has such faith in those wretches. He never sees their covert looks. To me every glance seems a threat—I live in mortal terror—"

Winthrop's hand closed firmly over hers. "I shall not leave you here, dear; don't you know that? If you will not go home with me, I shall stay here at Nafeka with you. I cannot endure such an agony of dread again. Dearest, how could you torture me so?"

"I didn't understand, Rob; I knew—nothing. Uncle had been here for years. He loved the creatures—and—and—he told me about his work. It seemed the noblest thing that I could do."

"Dear, look at me! I must know where I stand with you. When you left New York you had no faith in me. Has Nafeka taught you any trust, sweetheart? Could you—?"

"Nafeka—or something else—has taught me, Rob, that I always did have faith in you, though I may not have realized it. But—but—"

"Thank God for that, dearest. Why, Marian—"

"Wait a moment, Rob. I want to go away with you; to forget this hideous experience; I want to be sane and frivolous and safe—safe! once more—"

"You shall do exactly that, dear heart."

"I can't. I simply can't. I am no protection, of course, to uncle, but it would be such heinous cowardliness to go off and leave him alone. I feel instinctively that some plot is on foot—"

"I haven't a doubt of it, dear girl, but I have been through too much to be daunted by a trifle like that. I know some arguments that will move your uncle. I'll make him leave Nafeka! Trust me for that, Marian! But never mind Dr. Stanhope now. This is my hour. I have lived all of my life just for this. I am going to recite Mrs. Browning's Portuguese Sonnets to you. I am going—"

His voice trailed off into silence as Marian looked into his face—lips tremulous, eyes aflame.

At the dinner table, hours later, Winthrop bethought himself of the next important move in his game.

"I presume that I ought to pay my respects to the Chief Mogul here, Dr. Stanhope. Where is His Royal Highness's dirty hut?"

"Don't go today, Mr. Winthrop," the missionary begged hesitatingly; "the—the natives are not just themselves at present—"

"You mean—?" Winthrop's voice was imperative.

"They make a sort of wine here several times a year. I—I—have not been able to break them of the pernicious habit. It—it distresses me greatly. But they made some yesterday—and had a feast in the evening and—"

"And they are drunk at present, I conclude—the whole bunch of them."

"That's about it, I am sorry to say, but we, with our advantages of the most advanced civilization, are hardly in a position to cast many stones at them."

"Possibly not. However, I am sorry that I must defer my interview. I wished to see the dusky king as soon as possible. Wardwell was going to act as my interpreter."

"Tomorrow, probably—"

"Yes, I'll see him tomorrow. I think that I'll have Captain Maxwell

get out our Fourth of July cannon and all our flags; we'll give him a vociferous greeting."

Dr. Stanhope looked rather uncertainly across the table at his athletic young host. "From your tone, Mr. Winthrop, I infer that you have not much sympathy with my work."

"I have the greatest respect possible for you, Dr. Stanhope, but not one vestige for these natives, and so—perhaps we had better discuss that tomorrow."

"Or later still. I take it from what your friends have said that you will be at Nafeka for some days. That being the case I can take command of a little expedition to the islands south of here."

Winthrop sat up alertly. "Do you mind explaining more fully?"

"The king is sending several of his chief men on a sort of royal embassy to some of the neighboring tribes. He asked me to take charge of them, but I did not like to leave Marian—"

"I did not want him to go," Marian interjected in a low tone; "but I was quite as much afraid for him as for myself. I—I have a revolver—that Mr. Lewis made me take. Don't look so horrified, dear."

"I can't look any other way when I remember in what awful peril you have been living. I shall never be able to forget it as long as I live."

"I'll make you forget it!" she said softly. "It is all over now—and you are here, Rob. I am glad, glad—glad! You are so big and strong and confident and sure!"

"That sounds good to a fellow who has been homesick for you for months and months." Winthrop was smiling at her. "Don't worry now. I flatter myself that after I have had an interview with this beast of a king he will not consider it healthy to interfere with Dr. Stanhope. I wish I could see him today."

"No ~~be~~ trying, Rob. Ohorti—that's the king—and his special friend will be too drunk to see you until nearly noon tomorrow. The rest are not quite so bad—"

"Is drunkenness a royal prerogative?" Winthrop asked lightly. It

seemed to him at that moment that life had little more to offer him. The world was his, for the world was—Love!

"Well, that is true, dear, in some countries supposed to be civilized. Never mind old Ohorti now. Promise me to stay on board the yacht tonight. You are safe enough as long as we are here, but I shall feel better—"

"I'll stay," Marian interrupted swiftly. "Dear boy, Lucia told me what a nightmare of horror you have been living in—I am not worth it at all. If I had not been so conceited, so arrogant—"

"You had better not say very much more," Winthrop interposed, "unless you want me to kiss you before them all. I am not strong enough to resist temptation just now—"

With the strain removed from his mind Winthrop slept that night as he had not done for months. Marian was safe and in some way he would induce her uncle to move to a safer station of missionary work. Life was a grand, a glorious thing!

He was still sleeping soundly the next morning when Wardwell roused him. "Awfully sorry to disturb you, old man, but I didn't dare wait. Here is a note to you from Dr. Stanhope. He has gone off with that expedition, and—"

Winthrop was out of bed, alert and stern. "Give me that note. Now have Maxwell get out our toy cannon and fire it off until the men are tired. Send one of the natives up for Ohorti and his chiefs—tell the old fellow to get here as fast as he can move if he doesn't want his island blown to pieces."

"I thought that you were going to him—"

"Not now," grimly; "everything is changed. Hurry, Dick, that's a good fellow. Try and get Ohorti here by the time I'm on deck."

And Ohorti appeared—dazed, ugly, sullen and reticent, but perfectly sober. Much seemed to have happened since he had gotten so gloriously drunk the day before. This strange boat had

come with all the foreign people and the roar of cannon. He had thought himself freed from all such espionage with the departure of the cursed Englishmen.

The royal brow was corrugated by deeper frowns than usual. His men had started off on their expedition before he awoke—and the white missionary had accompanied them. Yesterday he had considered himself a master of diplomacy; today he was not so sure of it. In fact, he scented trouble for himself, and a few words from Wardwell strengthened his premonitions.

"Tell him, Dick," Winthrop commanded, "that we are going to follow Dr. Stanhope at once. Let him give you the directions, and if he foists any lies—he'll find out a few things that Americans can do. Tell him that if a single hair of Stanhope's head is hurt I'll put him in irons and take him to the English consul. He shall die as sure as there's a God in heaven! Pound that into his brain, Dick, good and strong."

He stood back while the conversation was carried on. He fancied that he detected deadly fear in Ohorti's bearing—and yet perhaps there was nothing wrong! He was growing as nervous as a woman.

Wardwell turned to him at last. "He has told me where his boat is headed and I imagine that he is speaking the truth. I rather think that he is as anxious for us to overtake Stanhope as you are—I don't just understand."

"I do," Winthrop said shortly, "Some infernal deviltry is up. They have planned some convenient accident! Give Maxwell orders, and then tell that beast that we are coming back to reckon with him. If there are any debts to pay, I shall pay them in full—you tell him so in the native lingo—and put it strong, Dick—strong as—"

"Yes, old fellow, but don't begin to worry needlessly. It will turn out all right."

Would it? That was the question which Winthrop asked himself ceaselessly throughout the long day. Ohorti's cringing, abject terror seemed to

give the lie to Wardwell's hopeful prophecy.

For Marian's sake he hid his dread and made light of her terrors. The day was nearly over and yet there was no sign of Stanhope and the Nafekians. Had Ohorti dared to lie about the direction which his men would take?

The gorgeous glory of the tropical evening would soon be over. Winthrop grew silent and harassed. If they did not sight the boat within an hour—

He swept the water with his glasses once again, slowly, carefully, deliberately. An incredulous exclamation was smothered on his lips. A moment later he had swept Marian into his arms and borne her downstairs.

"Keep her here, girls—don't any of you come up for a while—we shall have some work to do—" His lips were absolutely colorless; despite his efforts his voice shook.

He was on deck again before the amazed women could offer any protest.

"You—you saw it, Dick?"

Wardwell nodded. Words were impossible just then.

"And this morning—" Winthrop groaned, "he was alive—one of us—and now— The fiendish cruelty of it all! They'll pay for it! They'll pay for it dearly!" He was straining his eyes staring at a misshapen object in the bow of a small boat.

III

MARIAN had been married for almost a year. There had been a terrible illness. Winthrop feared at times that Fate was jesting with him—showing him the glory and beauty that life might hold, only to dash the cup of promise from his lips at last.

But slowly, very slowly, Marian turned her face again toward life and love. Nafeka and everything connected with it were tabooed subjects.

Winthrop wondered sometimes if this were the best course to pursue, but the doctor's injunctions had been stringent.

This evening she broke the silence herself.

"Rob, did—did you read the papers carefully today?"

"Yes, sweetheart."

"You saw—"

"I saw the despatch from London, if that is what you mean?"

"Yes, dear. Do you know, Bob, it takes the sting out of uncle's death for me? Before it had all seemed so useless, so unnecessary. A grand life was thrown away—and what was accomplished?"

"Humanly speaking—nothing," Winthrop said slowly. "He had not reached a single soul for permanent good. He had failed simply because circumstances and environment made success an impossibility."

"But his death has accomplished

what his life did not. The despatch said that the story of his life had created an immense impression."

"Yes. Wilson is going to reestablish his station at Nafeka on a stronger basis, and a group of energetic young men are going out to develop the island and—to teach the natives. It will inaugurate a new era for Nafeka."

"It is what uncle would have wished—he would have been satisfied with his part in bringing about such a result. Don't—don't be afraid to talk to me any more of Nafeka—and of uncle—I want to talk of him sometimes."

"I understand, dearest. And perhaps he was more nearly right than I in the estimate of values. There is one thing beyond the reach of ordinary logic, and that is—Love."



WONDER

By Allan Updegraff

I LOVE thee as I love a perfect flower,
Or a goodly book, not man-and-woman wise
And so much highlier thyself I prize
As thou'rt more wonderful than these things are.
I turn mine eyes to westward, where a star
Throbs on the rosy bosom of the skies;
I rapture in some lonely night-bird's cries,
And sway to sounds of great winds, come from far.

But God's high voice is not in all these things
So much as in the smallest part of thee,
So much as in this hand my two hands keep;
In strange far winds no such rapt wonder rings
As in thy voice, and purplest depths of sea
Are shallower than the soul of thee asleep.

NEVA

By Marie Louise Goetchius

THERE was a decided responsibility attached to Neva, but Lawrence Fairchild accepted it, and started out manfully on a modest income, a furnished apartment, a promising business and the confidence of a strong attachment for the wife he had chosen. She was a woman of swift tempests and sudden lulls—of vague eccentricities and erratic nerves. Life with her was apt to be a succession of unexplained surprises. She loved Lawrence so intensely, and yet so differently with each new mood, that the very daily necessities of his existence depended largely on her tears or smiles. He had never understood her, but what his average masculine intelligence failed to grasp, his naturally gentle patience found excuse for, and he steadily continued to be happy in spite of the uneven tenor of their relationship. In certain gusts of enlightenment she realized her shortcomings. Her efforts to darn these rent holes of temperamental imperfection were so extreme that they rendered impossible any latent normal power to become the useful helpmeet to him which she had yearned to be.

Their friends, their surroundings, were only an aggravation to the sensitive balance of her mind. "Bovine, all of them," she told herself passionately. Stupid were the wives and dull were the husbands who came formally to dinner sometimes, at Lawrence's request, and cautiously respectable was the world that held all these paragons of mechanical virtue.

There were periods of reaction when she enjoyed the company of the very perfections she had despised at other

times. But Lawrence trembled even more at her bursts of sociability than at her contempt for society. He dreaded the select gatherings of the chosen ones, where Neva, suddenly gracious, overflowing with so strong a personality that it could not be ignored, infused a spirit of disquiet through the usual dignified atmosphere. Whether it was the heightened color in her pale cheeks, the too excited gleam in her slanting blue eyes, or the too rapid gestures of her nervous hands, she always managed to convey a foreign element into the conventional circle. There had been psychic moments where she had blundered dramatically upon beds of dynamite and by a few thoughtless words exploded them. Lawrence shuddered for days afterward, when he remarked the silence and ruins after some of her ill-advised remarks. Upon realizing them herself, as she invariably did, she would relapse into periods of unrelieved melancholy far out of proportion to their worth. Then he would shake his head reprovingly and remonstrate with her for her inconsistencies.

"Neva, dear, can't you—moderate yourself a little?" It was enough to cause a tempest of tears, first angry, afterward penitent.

"I can't change myself," she would cry. "You married me this way; I was born this way. If you wish it, I'll leave you."

So, instead of scolding, he would find himself soothing her. The following hours would be pale, tense ones, bringing in their wake myriads of unnecessary proof of exaggerated affection; a dainty dinner that they could ill afford; some theatre tickets paid for

from the market money, a gardenia laid at his plate. All of which were accompanied by a humble droop to her narrow shoulders.

Then came evenings that they spent alone, filling his man's heart with satisfied peace; evenings of lazy companionship, bearing no hint of moods. Oh, those delicious times! Fire burning, lamps turned down, Neva, in some pretty flounced affair, deceptively domesticated, sitting in a big rocker with her long, straight golden hair parted, her face in repose, her body luxuriously relaxed, and her rather short, restless hands holding a book from which she read aloud when she was not glancing at Lawrence; he, lounging on the sofa, in splendid length, with his honest brown eyes half closed, his brown hair ruffled by the cushions, fragrant tobacco exhaling from a pipe in his wide, good-natured mouth, and one big, strong arm hanging over the side of the sofa. She always ended by throwing down the book and running to him. Then he would put his pipe aside and hold her tightly, with both arms around her, and tomorrow would seem an eternity off, even though there must be a tomorrow.

One morning she woke with a cold devil in her eyes—a mood of plaguing torment to Lawrence, which she knew in the end, like a boomerang, must strike her on its rebound. But in spite of the hour of flagellation and self-cruifixion that she felt, subconsciously, was inevitable, she allowed herself to sting him with unjust reproaches, to complain to him and to weep nervously.

He bore it stolidly, without answering, and his patience irritated her to a point of hysteria. Then at last he spoke.

"Neva," he said, "you ought to be ashamed of yourself. You are simply selfish and have no consideration for me."

He bent down, kissed her coldly, and in a moment she heard the door slam. She stamped her foot.

"I hate him! I hate him!" she began. Was there ever a more unhappy, misunderstood woman?

"You are simply selfish," she heard him again condemning her.

The tears which had been convulsing her stopped. A great revulsion of feeling swept over her mood. She was selfish, she was ruining his happiness. How could she make up to him? "No consideration for me"? It was so—everything he had blamed her for. She would run away because he would be better without her. No, she loved him—she adored him; she would spend her life in sackcloth and ashes for him; she would mend his clothes and fill his pipe and never, never be cross again. Feeling already as if she were treading on the rose clouds of her new resolutions, she began busying herself with infinities of household drudgery that she might tell him about them in the evening. She was purged, chastened, as if someone had soaped and cleaned all her wayward moods.

In the afternoon, just as she was going out to buy one of his favorite desserts for dinner, there was a sharp ring at the door-bell, an agitated servant, pale and frightened, a tramp of slow feet, a slight commotion in the hall, a strange man with a gentle voice and reassuring manner breaking some news to her.

She couldn't grasp it at first, except that Lawrence was hurt—no, not killed, but hurt—an accident in an elevator. No, not mortally hurt. They had brought him back to her. They were carrying him in. He was alive—her Lawrence. Then came a faint, overpowering desire to die before she saw him—to escape somewhere—a rising hysteria—a mighty effort of control—then numb, cold realization, mechanical assistance. His room was made ready; the blinds drawn; he was tenderly laid on the cool white bed; doctors were called.

Empty hours of waiting beside him; the final verdict, "Your husband will recover, but he must lose his arm"; a passionate prayer of thanks and an opening of the flood-gates, rushing of blood to her head, that throbbed and throbbed, her heart seemingly cut loose

from its moorings, beating irregularly, bounding over all her body. Then back to Lawrence, to sit by him through the long, dark hours of the night.

During the days and nights of suspense, when the sleek, silent-footed nurse had stolen in and out of the shadowy room, carrying ugly bottles, steaming bowls of strange-smelling liquids and white bandages; when the air had been saturated with the super-cleanly odor of carbolic; when each moment resembled the other and the whole host of hours had seemed to march silently, with black faces and impassive silhouettes, down a long, ghostly avenue of unreality—Neva, caught in their unfeeling ranks, was borne without volition or resistance toward an unconsidered future. It was enough to sit by her husband, looking steadily at him with strained, dry eyes, and to listen to his breathing as he slept. The morning she had been cruel to him, his leave-taking, her frantic repentance, were only tiny dots on a far-distant horizon. Temporarily it was as if her entire nervous system had been dosed with cocaine.

He convalesced rapidly. At first he was too weary to question what it all meant, but one morning the full shock of loss struck him. It was a day of despair—a day of tossing and renewed fever—a day of pitying glances from the nurse and sick awakening to Neva. Toward evening exhaustion came, and dull, hopeless resignation, which she tried to combat as strongly as she had done the previous terror.

"We are going to be happy, Lawrence," she repeated again and again to him. "We must thank God that you have been spared."

She managed to calm him. In a week or two he was up and about, apparently the same, but there was a sharp line of pain carved between his eyes, and his lips were drawn a little too tightly together to be natural. He had become acutely sensitive, irritable over small things, almost as nervous as Neva. There was no further excuse. He had to go out—

downtown. Business pressed—cares had multiplied. Neva noticed with quick insight that he shrank consciously from the stares of people; that he saw pity and attention where they were not, that he avoided the outside world and lived in a misery of imagined eyes and voices turned toward him, detecting his loss and whispering of it. Their positions had been reversed by the ironic lever of Fate.

In calming his moods she now had no leisure for her own; but consistent to her high-strung temperament, her sense of duty to him became a violent obsession and she strained her whole tense body and soul to fulfil this duty. The subject of his loss was never referred to, and after a long time a gradual lessening of the taut strings in his condition was noticeable. He was still sensitive, but on the surface there developed a slowly cultivated echo of his old self—a trifle listless, but a good enough imitation to occasionally deceive. Neva, feeling the real from the sham, even while she pretended to believe that all was as before, lavished more care and love on him each day. Unsparing in her attention, she surrounded him by a protective framework of passionate thought, and he allowed her devotion full range. Although he accepted passively her extravagant adoration and exhaustless plans for his distraction, he grew to depend upon them as the wine and bread of his life.

This state of affairs lasted longer than anything else had ever done in Neva's uneven existence. Then came the inevitable reaction, and in measure as Lawrence forgot, she remembered. She caught herself looking nervously at him. He began to fascinate her, even while she felt the fascination a guilty one, but there seemed to be no avoiding that empty sleeve. She had started cutting up his food for him when the question arose as to how he could manage it; now when the plate was brought to her a quick, furious scarlet would rush to her cheeks. His helplessness distressed her and made her self-contemptuous because she could not rise above the consciousness of it.

She became sorry for him and for herself—then gradually only for herself. Shame at her selfishness burned through the mask of false feelings and she woke to the blasting realization that she was victim of a contemptible nervous dread for her husband's misfortune. With it came the consciousness that she must immediately prove herself immune to the creeping fear of his affliction that had taken possession of her. It was no use! She struggled impotently in its mastery, but with each new effort to overcome it, it gripped with fresh power. Her days becoming a jumble of nerves and fits of acute self-reproach, she let him go from her in the morning with a sense of relief, then spent the rest of the time until his return in schooling and restraining herself to the attempt of welcoming him back naturally. Her erratic reputation stood her well, for Lawrence, who was regaining step by step his strength and spirits, noticed nothing unusual about her behavior.

It soon came to the point, however, where she told herself it was merely a question of time when she would betray her terror of the thing, and let him see that he was losing her through the very cause that should have brought her nearer to him. She grew faint with the thought of such a revelation, for she knew that he would never recover from it. Anything but that.

There must be a cure. Nothing was too violent. Feverishly she racked her mind for means to end it. Round and round, like a spiked wheel of torture flew her completely unsettled brain—and above it, stronger than the fear itself, was the resolve not to let him know—not yet. She watched him consciously for signs of suspicion, but some business affairs were engrossing his attention and he had little time for other observations. He grew absent-minded and she thought he was on the verge of discovery. All the while the mute, empty sleeve, with its cuff tucked in his pocket, seemed to stand a limp witness of her remorse. A solution of it must come soon, or in an abandoned moment she would scream her miserable

fears out to him. Mercifully she swallowed such impulses, although their taste was raw and bitter, but the snapping of the thread was perilously near.

At last one day she put on her hat and coat deliberately, gave a last parting look at her face—marred and convulsed as it had become by frequent ravages of spirit—and slowly shut the door behind her. She had made up her mind not to come back until she found some settlement of the problem which was driving her in front of it with its nerve whip.

She had reached the point where she could think of nothing but extremes. The intermediate notes between the highest and lowest had fallen out of the scale, leaving emptiness where there should have been gradations. She must tell Lawrence that she could no longer live sanely with him, or she must finally overcome her dread and hatred of what had happened. But how, how could she do either of those two things?

Meanwhile her body moved on with clockwork precision, obeying an absent-minded will-power to keep walking anywhere, over the hard pavements, dodging the carriages and cars, and bundles and people and lamp-posts that kept getting in her way. A woman jostled against her; a man stared down impertinently at her face; a ragged newsboy ran a few paces beside her; a policeman guided her across the street. But they soon dropped away, for they were only creatures of a distant world, whose touch could not penetrate the thick wrappings of her concentration. Her brain raced back and forth like a caged animal—once in a while clawing the bars of its prison. How? How? she kept asking herself. The words forced through her lips and she suddenly awoke to the fact that she was talking out loud; that people—there *were* people—glanced at her askance as she passed. It didn't matter.

If it had come to her instead of to Lawrence it would have made a difference, for the pain which strikes at us through others is infinitely more acute than the one created or caused by ourselves. Therefore, she reasoned,

the root of her trouble lay in the fact that Lawrence was the primary sufferer. Still, she was arguing from a strong personal standpoint, for Lawrence never would have hated her in like circumstances. Of that she was passionately sure. It gave her a pang of gratification to think how unselfishly protective his attitude would have grown toward her. Then why, she asked herself despairingly, had not their positions been reversed—why had Inconsistency's restless fingers twisted so mercilessly the strings that dangle its puppets? She pictured herself as she could have been in her husband's place, and she saw him as he would have been in hers. Then with a rapid, obliterating stroke of her imagination she wished that neither of them had arms.

Like a flash of fire, singeing, warping the very machinery of her mind, the thought leaped to life. She shook herself impatiently. What was the use of indulging in such mad fancies? It brought the solution no nearer. Couldn't one thing negative another? persisted the original thought. How? How? again she asked herself. If she were like Lawrence would her recoil be as great for Lawrence? She stopped suddenly and put both hands to her head—then hurried on.

A violent fit of shivering fear seized her. She stopped again, and shaking with the force of suggestion held on to a stone balustrade for support. In a sudden frightened awakening her mind retreated from her imagination, leaving her aghast at its daring. Unconsciously she hugged her arms close to her body, as if in savage protection of them.

Then she questioned herself cruelly, relentlessly. Would she be able to go back to Lawrence, if she were as he was? She remembered small lovable things about him—his patience, his care, his many sacrifices. How grateful had she been? A wild frenzy of love for him broke down her reason and shattered her selfishness, leaving her trembling with mistaken heroism. She was capable of sacrifice too—if she

were sure, because she could never live with him as things had become.

It was getting dark. Lights were lit; the streets were gray and black; traffic moved along the thoroughfares like a slow, unwieldy monster made of a thousand separate parts and ear-rending noises. Everyone seemed in a hurry. She must get home. As she thought of what awaited her she hesitated. A car came clanging toward her, freighted with swaying humanity—a juggernaut car. Well, why not? She started for it—her foot struck the edge of the curb and she stood there dumbly—her arm stretched half out, her mind a blank. A grating brake—a bell—it stopped at the corner.

She breathed deep and turned away. She dared not look again—it had been so near. A quick faintness pricked through her body and went tingling its way in quick shivers to her very fingernails. She dared not move while it lasted, but soon it subsided like a wave reluctantly leaving a shore, and in its place there grew a great fear—a fear not so much of herself as of the giant, grinding masses outside of herself. The square of pavement upon which she stood, with its ragged line etching it out from the other squares, seemed suddenly to be the one solid protection her nerve-shaken brain could grasp. The thought came to her that she must remain where she was forever, if she wished to gain mastery over the instinct which still trembled with its original impulse of destruction.

Losing sight of her action she felt as if she had snatched herself from a terrible danger, in which Someone else, some iron-fingered Arbiter, had pushed her. She dragged her mind back to point at the danger and give it a name. Its hideousness evolved slowly from her will to see it—and she remembered it by inches. It was after all a question of nothing but herself and what she had been trying to do with herself. A nausea came with the recollection of physical horror. She shuddered at the mere retrospective fact of its existence and in an intense imaginative pain her arm grew numb.

The touch of her nervous fingers twinging at it inquiringly, the actual bruising of her own skin, brought with them a strange comfort. In a quick reaction of relief her emotions, ashamed at their own panic, steadied themselves and from their depths rose an exaltation of spirit, tensely wired, shooting up through a suddenly transfigured consciousness. Her whole being vibrated in triumphant response—rejoicing in its freedom. She seemed to be looking down at a state of mind she had dropped a long time ago, which lay huddled like a discarded heap of clothing at the bottom of a dark closet. Then curiously, like one who must know what she has never known and see what she has never seen, she strained back her thoughts for the second time to their original point and tried deliberately to make them relive through their former state of hysteria. But they refused. They no longer seemed real to her—their past shapes were blurred, fading more each moment beneath the strong flaring light of reaction. She could not even feel or touch Lawrence by these thoughts. There seemed to be in fact no relationship with him. All claim of the personal disappeared in a vast cosmic sense of detachment—aloneness. The rivets of responsibility and place no longer held her down. Her spirit flew on up into space, without sex or mood. The world fell from her; sound fell from her.

Two children were racing down the street. They had escaped from their nurse, their loud, tumble-curved exuberance ignoring restraint. They coursed down the very middle of the sidewalk, scattering sublimely the stupid obstacles in their way. Neva was in their way. The first child in full force of motion lost its steering power. It crashed into Neva, swung around her skirts, clinging with outstretched hands to her waist, then losing hold, fell a rumpled heap on the hard pavement. The second child stopped itself by the same means, but kept its balance.

The shock was impelling. Mechanically Neva picked the child up. It was beginning, after its first full moment of unrealized, to whimper.

Children had never entered into Neva's scheme of things. She did not know how to handle them. But now she bent down to the small aggrieved one and gently touched its shoulder.

"Don't cry," she said. Then suddenly, as she saw the tiny, almost invisible bruise on the child's arm, lifted up confidently to her, the protective tenderness which she had felt while nursing Lawrence flooded back to her soul. She recognized it. It soothed her like the stroke of a comforting hand. All other emotions from which she had vibrated—all other moods dropped away colorlessly. She felt as if she had come face to face again with something beautiful she had once known and which was her own and always had been. The child would pass on. It was already chubbily smiling again as it trotted off back toward its nurse—the other one after it.

In a wonderful hesitation Neva stretched out her arms to this new tenderness. Then a jealous impulse came to her to hold it alone, to feel if it were really hers. There was a church on the corner. The hour meant nothing to her now—the clocks had stopped ticking in her mind. She went to the church. The door swung open under eager fingers. It was quite dark inside and the air was sweet. She slipped into one of the pews, and leaning back among the shadows, abandoned herself to revelation. Lawrence and the child became one in her thoughts. Both had been hurt—one badly, one just a little. She had bent over them both. The blessedness of the feeling again surged over her. What was it? What was the answer to these puzzling things? Why for so many days and nights had she been struggling with shapes of her own creating? Where had they gone now?

A woman carrying a baby slipped down the aisle. Neva saw her and with an instinctive desire to grasp at understanding, watched her. She held the baby close and the baby did not cry. Neva reflected idly how strange it was that there should be so many children

passing through this particular hour in her life. She wondered why the mother and baby had come like the scenic noiseless clockwork of pre-arranged effect. Then suddenly realization flashed upon her of the tremendous egoism in such a thought. The mother, the children had always been there. Each moment was alive with such children and mothers, only she—Neva, had never noticed them before. The significance of self-confession caused her to kneel and hide her face in her hands.

But as she knelt she felt the presence of something hovering over her—something which seemed to have the calm maternity of wings. It named itself to her—Hope. It brushed across her being, sweeping out the haunted corners.

She felt her husband close to her; she felt the instinct of protection for him rise softly in her heart, and as her face bent over him she felt its expression, she saw it as in a mirror. It was the face of a mother.



THE DEAR PLACE

I LOVE my home; no other place
Seems half so dear to me.
With wife and fourteen children
It could no dearer be.



FROM THE JOURNAL OF MADAME LEANDRE

THERE is ever a wistfully plaintive note added to our happiness. Only in pleasure, in reckless, sparkling pleasure, can we forget that we are mortals, born to suffer.

WHAT you yourself do, not what others do to you, makes up the sum of your life. You alone are responsible for its happiness or its wretchedness.

LOVE lives too short and dies too long.

To understand me and be kin to me it is essential that we should start from the same point of view—not that we reach the same conclusions. For no matter how congenial you may be in your tastes and talents, if our fundamental ideas are not kin, friendships cannot last.

HELEN WOLJESKA.

"SWEET"

By Thomas L. Masson

I HAD just returned from Africa—a place, by the way, not half so desirable to return from as of old. In the glorious old days the man from Africa was really a lion. In a sense the African lions made him one, for he carried about him an impression of narrow escapes with big game; also a sort of mysterious mingling of mines, jungles, and cannibals. But the Boer War made Africa vulgar, reduced it more to the dead level of other commonplace countries. What a pity, indeed, that the unknown places on the globe are so rapidly becoming extinct! They afforded such a help to the imagination.

She was to me a wonderfully pretty girl, not because I had just returned from Africa, but because she was really intrinsically pretty. That is, I sternly separated that flood of homesickness, that warped, prejudiced craving for almost anything human and native that a man has who has been isolated long from his own kind, and judged her from the purely critical standpoint.

She was, even from this standpoint, the kind of pretty girl known as "sweet." Doubtless you have dreamed of that kind before—one that if you had lived in bygone days you would have loved to capture from some lonely rock-bound citadel, and with tender solicitude journeyed with through untold hardships until you had with knightly prowess brought her back to the ivy-covered baronial castle. Or possibly once in your lifetime you may have actually known such a one, and if you have, you will realize how hard it has been not to take her in your arms, not to forget yourself utterly and completely, disregarding everything else.

Perhaps I felt a touch of this at once, for I hastened away with her to a corner of the ball-room, as far as possible removed from the music, while certain other young men hovered in the distance. Even Africa, however, as shopworn and public as it has become, I fancied helped me, for it seemed to keep them sufficiently remote.

"I don't dance," I said—not apologetically nor defiantly, but quite historically—"and so, if you—"

"Oh, no," she protested, "I would rather sit it out. I'm so tired already. I sometimes wish I had never learned to dance. I always feel conspicuous."

I thought I detected traces of a distant tear in her voice. I was all sympathy at once. How easy to be sympathetic with a girl like that!

I was about to say, "What, and you so young!" when it occurred to me that she was really too young even to imply that she *was* young. It would have been quite proper and diplomatic, possibly, to have inferred at this point that she had been surfeited with dancing. But this assumption of being blasé did not seem to fit her. And so I said, with a real human lift to my voice:

"That consoles me for never having learned. Although"—I wanted her to confide in me, so I confided in her—"although," I continued in a lower tone, "it makes me feel fearfully awkward at times—when I'm here. Then I wish I had learned. I'm quite ashamed of myself. I have that horrible feeling that nobody likes—that I am out of it."

"Do you really feel that way?" she asked, looking at me with wide-open

eyes. I was just beginning to realize—and to appreciate—how young she was. It gave me a cue.

"Oh, yes, indeed," I replied warmly; "I don't suppose you understand it, because you've never been out of it a moment, I fancy, but—I assure you I've never confessed this to anyone before—I've suffered agonies of mind over my awkwardness. It pursues me everywhere. I don't suppose I'll ever get over it."

"Do you really mean that?" she said. There seemed to be a trace of anxiety in her voice.

"Yes, indeed—that, and all it implies. If"—I said this with a note of appeal—"someone—you, for example—could only feel sorry for me—"

"I do, I do."

She flashed her eyes at me frankly, and then, like the dear sweet thing she was, dropped them instantly.

"Because," she continued, "that's the way I've felt myself."

"Have you?" I said almost breathlessly. "Oh, I'm so glad. That is—I mean—of course I'm sorry—for your sake. But I mean that I'm glad—for my own. Have you—honestly—felt that way very much?"

"Oh, yes, very much. You see"—her voice was lowered almost to a whisper now; she looked furtively about her as if she expected that behind the palms Indians were concealed and might spring out at any moment to scalp us both—"I came out only last week."

Ah! Somehow it came to me as a shock. And yet as I looked at her there was no reason to doubt it. And so this sweet girl was a "bud." I found myself calculating her age—wondering if the time of "coming out" differed in different States. Then I figured roughly that she must be eighteen. Well, I wasn't so much older. The discrepancy between our ages indeed appeared to me to be mathematically and connumerally correct. I began to hear distant wedding-bells. I could see orange-blossoms floating around in the air. For here indeed was the one girl with whom there had been immediately set

up a mutual confidence—on the basis of our shortcomings.

"How grand!" I whispered. "Tell me about it."

"But it wasn't. It was awful!"

"Were you—" I felt around in my mind for the one word that would convey the exact condition of our confidence in each other—the one word that would, so to speak, bind the unconscious bargain between us—"nervous?"

"Terribly!"

"Perhaps"—I had a younger sister and felt on comparatively safe ground—"perhaps you had trouble with your gown."

"How did you guess that?" She looked at me amusedly.

"I don't know," I replied, with a show of embarrassment, "except that somehow you never can depend on material things at critical times. Oliver Holmes said, I believe, that the consciousness of being well-dressed was better than the consolation of religion. But when it is a first experiment there is always a doubt about it."

She looked at me shyly.

"It wasn't the gown," she said, "by itself, but it was—*everything*."

"That's it," I nodded sympathetically. "You see, it isn't really the gown, or the coat, but it's the state of mind. When you don't care, nothing happens. But when you can't help but care then you can't help everything happening."

"That's just it!" she exclaimed. "Oh, how well you have put it. It seemed as if, you know, on that first evening everyone was looking at me—searching my soul—wondering how I felt, noticing every gesture. I fancied they were talking about me in groups—I honestly, even now, believe they were. Oh, I was so glad to get home!"

"I know that feeling!" I exclaimed. "Once I was asked to lecture, and oh, what I went through! Do you know, I feel as if I had known you forever."

She smiled. The music had stopped. A tall man was approaching.

"Oh, dear," she murmured, "we were having such a delightful time."

And here comes Jack for the next dance."

"Can't you put him off?" I murmured.

She looked at me reproachfully. "You don't know Jack," she said.

She rose. She held out a hand in her sweet, embarrassed way. No wonder men are weak. I would with the utmost enthusiasm have committed any crime in the calendar for a girl like that.

"I'm so glad to have met you, Mr. Callington," she said.

She had the advantage of me there. I suddenly remembered that I had not caught her name when the hostess introduced me. I blushed.

"We—shall—meet—again, I hope, Miss, er—er—" I stammered.

She smiled—still shyly.

"I'm a Mrs.," she said. "But don't feel badly, now, please, because the mistake was quite natural. My husband, Mr. Dilber, Mr. Callington."

I bowed stiffly, while they passed on to the music. If I had been a woman,

of course I should have noticed that wedding-ring at once. After all, what had Africa, in the way of sharpening my eyesight, done for me? Then I turned to the hostess. I grabbed her, with my usual awkwardness, by the arm.

"Look here," I said, "that young thing—Mrs. Dilber—please tell me—what did she mean by saying that she had just come out?"

The hostess laughed, a short, dry laugh.

"Oh," she said, "I forgot you'd been in Africa. Fascinating, isn't she? That innocent-looking kind always is, you know. Why, she meant coming out after her last divorce. That's a phrase they use now, I believe, when they emerge again after another marriage."

I took a long breath. I could feel my heart begin to ossify.

"Oh, by the way," I said, half-indifferently, "this then, is her second husband?"

"Or third," replied the hostess doubtfully.



IDLESSE

By Clinton Scollard

LILTING water and lyric bird,
 And the low wind laughing by,
 And in the golden blur of the air
 The bronze of the butterfly,
 While up through the limpid cool of the pool
 A fin-flash fleet and shy!

Flush of the purple raspberry flower;
 Chime of the foxglove bells;
 Gleams from the ox-eyed daisy's torch;
 Beams from the primrose-cells;
 And the dainty dots of forget-me-nots,
 And the fire-weed's spangled spells!

A nameless attar out of the earth
 As sweet as the bruised bay;
 The waft of mint and the balsam breath,
 And the scent of the honeyed hay;
 All of the lure and the calm heart-cure
 In the touch of a Summer day!

LOATHLY LOVER

By Edna Kenton

ALL the cynics could have told her—some of them, being her dear, good friends, did tell her long before and repeatedly—that her affair with Richard McLester could have but one ending. She herself, during the years that McLester was striding toward his public goal, told herself the same thing more than once when his letters were a trifle tardy in reaching her, or when his brief telegrams came, saying that he could not make her town for that week's end visit. For she was a clever woman always, and a sane one, however much she loved. Yet the end had come, after fifteen years, as such endings always come, with all the shocking agony of the unexpected bolt of fire. McLester had decided that he needed now the garment of respectability that a home and a wife casts about the swiftest paced of the sons of men, and his present plans included a prudent marriage within a few months. And his bride, as all the world's wives could have forecasted fifteen years back, was not to be Alice Gilbert.

There had been, before the blow fell, a lapse of four weeks without sight of each other, the longest period in all the fifteen years that he had suffered to pass without coming to her or sending for her—in all these years he would never hear to her making her home in his city, and Boston and New York are not so far apart as to make weekly trips more than a swiftly passing inconvenience. There passed four lonely weeks without sight of him and those four weeks without a letter, merely telegrams announcing his unavoidable detention. Finally, after the manner of women, she turned her other

cheek for the blow that might be waiting for her and wrote him a letter, quiet enough, but full of all the love of all the years through which she had waited.

"He must answer this!" she had breathed, with a throb of her heart which paled her cheeks and made the sealing of the envelope a blurred splotch of gilt wax, and all but held her back from the posting of it.

And she had not mistaken the letter's imperative quality. Every line of it called McLester's hand, called it all the more because no line held any tangible demand. By return post his answer came, quite as if he had been waiting for the opening she gave him.

I have decided to marry. . . . My career is lying straight before me. . . . I need the social aid a wife can give her husband. . . . You do not know her. . . . If she had her point of view I should not object to your meeting, but she is very young. . . . Let us always be friendly, if not friends.

And Alice Gilbert, reading that last sentence, which contained as vivid a plea as her whole letter to him to which this was answer, and thinking of all the incriminating documents which she had kept over from his callow, incautious days, wished passionately for one black moment that she were the sort of woman to whom breach-of-promise suits and their ilk were possible things. For years his "career" had been his god, his fetish even; it was now, and would be until his death, and he had cause to fear for it now. With all that he must know of her unlikeness to her sisters of the flowered robes and grasping hands, he still had cause to fear. For some crises of life

have driven the meekest to insensate madnesses.

But she kept her hold of her real self and every morning, when she waked to dulled life, she strove stubbornly after her standpoint, which ever slipped like some nightmareish fantasy from her feeble grasp; and she tried patiently to keep always before her the memory of that moment, fifteen years before, when she held dull respectability lived out beside a loutish, half-brutish husband, in one hand, and life and love—with their pains and risks—in the other, and had chosen freely, with open eyes and mind, the life the left hand held for her. "Whatever comes," she had said then, and had sworn never to forget it. All this she tried patiently to remember, and she fought down the waves of self-pity which all but submerged her, and which could drive her nowhere but to the end—all of life, and for a week went about her usual occupations. The letter she did not answer.

At the week's end there came a telegram:

Shall arrive on the 6.00 tonight.

R. McL.

Mrs. Gilbert read it over twice, and then called her little maid to her.

"I am going away for over Sunday, Rosa," she said quietly. "You may go to your sister's for a few days—until I send you word."

As she settled herself in the early afternoon train for New York, she did not feel like a coward at all, running from the flare of powder. She simply was not ready to meet the man who for fifteen years had been her lover and who had only five days before thrown her definitely aside for a girl, "very young"—minus "a point of view," but the daughter of his State's governor. She glanced again at herself in one of the omnipresent mirrors, and knew that in spite of what she had walked through these last five days she did not look her thirty-five years—McLester was forty-two! If the girl was very young indeed, it must mean that he was more than twice her age—Tom Gilbert had

been more than that when he had married her, twenty years before. She shuddered as she thought of Gilbert, forgotten almost from the moment she left him, dead now for years. No wonder she had left him—for Dick—Dick McLester, who had drifted into that country town of hers for a brief year, young and ardent and brilliant and alive, and had caught her up in a very chariot of flame and borne her away. . . .

She changed her current of thought resolutely, for along that channel lay madness and loss of all her self-control. So she smiled a little as she thought of how within a brief time she and McLester would pass each other with a roar and rush, he bound for her city; she for his. She smiled too as she thought of McLester hammering stubbornly away at her door; of McLester calling her telephone number time and again. She had carefully dropped the re-sealed telegram in her mail-box. Rosa had signed for it, and let him look up the time of its delivery as he wished and explain it as he might, he could hardly be sure that she had left solely because he was coming. She smiled as she reflected carefully that he could not be sure of anything.

Instead of staying two days away from her home, she stayed two weeks. She was a woman of rare perceptions and gifts, and she had her rare friends. She frittered away every waking hour and drugged herself into slumber at night. Then one morning she awoke serenely, without the habitual start into throbbing pain, and looked calmly upon the sword hanging by its fabled hair above her bed.

"Let it fall!" she said aloud, and in a trance of composure she packed her things and left that day for her home.

The rooms she had left so hurriedly were dreary and close enough as she entered them, and she flung every window wide and straightened chairs and furniture before she sat down with the pile of letters and telegrams that had accumulated in the two weeks. All of the latter were from McLester, and several of the former. She smiled a little as she ripped open one telegram after

another and caught his state of mind. McLester was undoubtedly dubious; even a little frightened, for in these two weeks he had come up four times. She knew him so well that she could see into his mind with startlingly clear vision, and the sight helped her a little. She had meant to frighten him, perhaps, but in common with her sisters she loathed a coward, although she knew that he had cause for fear for his "career."

"He has not begged yet, but he wants his letters more than he wants salvation—they are salvation, he thinks."

Still wrapped about with her immutable composure, she went to a locked drawer in her desk and drew them out—yellowed things, soiled with time and handling; and as she held them in her hands sentences from the hidden pages seemed to flash up at her; all of them of a type which would make the rarest of feasting in the camp of his enemies.

"But I am not that sort of woman; why does he fear it?" she asked herself, and the silent question helped her as had the knowledge of his coward's fear a while back.

"It is so common to fear that from me!" she sneered, and the sneer was for herself. If he had known her so little in their years together as to think this thing of her at the end, she too had been too blind to see in him the strain of coarse misunderstanding of her deepest qualities and motives.

And while she stood there, with the letters in her hand, her bell rang sharply—one long, fierce ring and two short, sharp ones. It was McLester's ring, and even as she listened and knew him to be below, her insensate composure never faltered. She had come back without a definite plan of action, but now she was ready for anything, and she was not only ready, but ready for the end. Here it was, close upon her.

She laid the letters back in the drawer and went to the door herself, with her traveling-hat still on.

"Where is Rosa? Where have you been? I have been afraid you were—ill—"

McLester stammered it all out as he stood in the hall. Evidently his coming there had been a part of some madness on his own part, for his surprise at seeing her was unfeigned. And when he entered the apartment he stood at loss. The suspense of the two weeks had told on his nerves, which were usually of stoical fiber.

"Rosa?" repeated the woman he had come many miles to see. "She has been with her sister—by the way, will you call Mrs. Zabinski up, Dick, while I close some of these windows? Tell Rosa I am back and want her to come this evening if she can. I? Oh, I ran down to New York for two weeks . . . Rosa—can she come? That's good. Oh, sit down, Dick. Your pipe is over there. No? Then sit down and don't smoke—I saw Frank Lamont in one of the hotels last week, dining with a crowd. By the way, did we come up together today?"

"I came yesterday," McLester mumbled, and was at a loss again. He, a man who had addressed his thousands, and, what is infinitely more difficult, his select hundreds, was dumb before the slight woman who sat before him, neither fury nor fragility, but embodied master of the moment. It was not a rare situation, for women are often so unhumanly gifted in crises, and McLester knew it, as he knew most things about women. But the silence of these weeks had got on his nerves rather badly, and Alice could do such a damned lot of mischief . . . His thoughts ran in channels that could not be verbalized and he could not change their current, so he sat dashed and silent.

As for Alice, she was not thinking; she was relying solely on the present moment, with her strange composure unpierced. Finally, when McLester could hardly affirm or disclaim intelligently, she swung the talk straight into vital things.

"And so you are going to marry the governor's daughter, Dick?"

She leaned back in her chair a little wearily, and as he stammered his reply she looked at him, seeing him not as he was, but as he had been fifteen years before, when she knew him first, when he had come into her life as the gods once came down to make mortals happy. Even in this moment she was glad that she had been brave enough to choose to live, to choose to go with him away from that brutish lout she had been all but sold to in her mid-teens. Old Tom Gilbert—she could see him now, heavy, thick-set, with his reddened eyes and his alcoholic nose, and his coarsened skin and tyrannical temper.

She leaned forward with a little gasp, her one sign of weakness in all the interview, and she opened and shut her eyes rapidly to clear her blurred vision and dispel her slight dizziness. For the half of one delirious second she had thought that the thick-set, stocky man opposite her, with his reddened eyes and discolored teeth and coarsened skin, was no other than that man she had married first, who had died since, who had surely died. Then the delirium passed, and she saw that it was only Dick sitting there—only Dick.

Her gasp made McLester brave for the first time since he had written her that decisive letter. But unfortunately his inner consciousness that his courage was but overlay and thin veneer made him swagger a little, incited him to the use even of a slightly bullying tone.

"Of course, Alice, you're going to be sensible about this, and it's going to be all right for you, in any case. This girl is well enough, and my career—a man can't damn his career. If a public man could guard against scandals he might live his life as he would like to live it, and in that case you'd still stay in mine. You must understand though," hurriedly, "that it's best to break this off entirely—like that! I'm resolved on that, understand. But I'll fix you—you don't need to worry any for the future—"

He paused, disheartened, as her laugh struck discouragingly against his bul-

wark of bravado and battered it down. And he cursed inwardly as he beheld his new-found courage reel and totter, and realized that he had not yet taken one step along the path which would lead him to the possession of those letters—those early, asinine letters of his to her. He could not know that she had followed hardly a word of what he had been saying; that her laugh was wholly for her comparison, which was comparison no longer, but identity. One cannot compare things that are alike. She laughed again as she thought of old Tom Gilbert and old Dick McLester. Things alike, at last!

And then, while his pause grew sodden and heavy, all that he had been saying came back to her, sentence by sentence, and she looked at him with eyes so bright that he could think of no words with which to lift the pall of silence. Already he was regretting a part of the bravado he had mistaken for bravery. She spoke at last, reflectively, even gently.

"But won't it be a little hard on the young girl, poor child!" she mused. "Only seventeen! Your breath is bad, you know, and you are fat, and growing old. Your eyes are red all the time now, and they are quite revolting—sometimes. No, Dick, not even your 'career,' gorgeous as it may be, is going to make up to that poor child for a fat old man with stained teeth and reddened eyes, and a tobacco-tainted breath."

He flushed purple, and his eyes took all the vivid color at which she had so delicately shivered. But he tried to laugh.

"After all, you—" he began, with the unwisdom of fury that must be compressed. She laughed without his obvious attempt at mirth.

"If I knew you fifteen years ago, when you were slim and strong and didn't puff when you ran, much less walked, and I've been able to think of you in these degenerating years as you were then, in those bad days when I was married to a fat old man with tobacco-stained lips. Do you remember how I used to mimic his lumbering

love-making to you, years ago? Ah, me, Dick, how *she* is going to ridicule you to the inevitable young god some day!"

She paused lightly, while she watched the purple blood creep over his face. Twice he tried to speak, and no words came, and then she added:

"Count the cost tonight, standing before your mirror, and make up your mind never to blame her, Dick, if she is caught up in the whirlwind of life, and takes her youth and her beauty away from you without permission or regret. And if she goes, she will be doing right in choosing to live, to leave the fat old man for the slim young one whose kisses are the wine of Spring. Ah, it was hard on me, eighteen years ago, when I was as young as she, and I know; that is why I am so sorry for her today."

He got up to go, still purple, still speechless, still awkward and at loss. And after a moment she rose too.

"You are forgetting something," she said at last, and laughed a little to see him glance apprehensively at the table, and at the floor, and at the chair where he had been sitting. When he looked back at her, helplessly, questioningly, she smiled a smile that he cursed.

"Your 'career'! Don't tell me you've forgotten it, at last, even for a moment!"

He watched her, with set teeth, as she moved toward the desk where every letter she had written to him had been penned, and drew out the parcel of letters he had come to get.

Earlier in the afternoon, had there been no other way, he could have murdered her for the sake of getting them into his hands, but if he had murdered her now, the motive would not have been the same. And for lesser passions than he felt then, women have died.

She looked coolly upon him as he ran his fingers through the bundle, and at last she spoke.

"They are all there, every one that I have saved. I haven't kept a line of your handwriting in my possession—except these late ones; take them. The 'career' is safe from me."

"Thanks," he uttered then, for he knew the note of truth in men or women when he heard it. And in that moment he dared to hold out his hand.

Perceiving the stretch of courage that it took for him to compass that simple movement of the arm, and because his touch meant nothing to her now, nor ever could again, she touched his hand lightly with her own.

"Good-bye," he muttered heavily.

"Good-bye, Dick." Her tone was casual and light.

At the door he turned.

"If I can ever do anything for you—" he blundered, and came to a full stop before her smile.

"Nothing for me, Dick," she answered. "But for her sake, try not to kiss her often."

And McLester went away, carrying with him forever, as her last word to him, her plea for an unknown sister about to tread the winepress she had trod.



AN INSIDIOUS INSINUATION

MRS. SHARPE—I am quite certain that I know of no one so utterly selfish as you are.

MR. SHARPE—Indeed! And yet you claim that you know yourself perfectly!

THE COMING OF MONSIEUR CHARVET

By Elizabeth Moorhead

EVERYBODY went to the Loan Exhibition of Modern Portraits, of course. It was a brilliant affair, and vastly inclusive as well, offering for the modest sum of one dollar an opportunity to those on the outer edges of society to view the potentates of the inner circle both on canvas and in the flesh, and even to receive tea and wafers at the hands of certain fair originals who had consented to dispense this mild refreshment in an anteroom as an added lure. Incidentally one contributed by this agreeable method to a highly reputable charity.

When I caught a glimpse of Letitia in the crowded gallery I naturally acquitted her of any frivolous intention, feeling sure that she was taking an afternoon off for no reason but a praiseworthy desire to aid the aforementioned charity and to gratify a pretty taste in the art of portraiture. To my surprise she appeared to be riveted before a flamboyant though undeniably clever presentment of a very great lady in white satin, whose ample shoulders and bust were liberally displayed and scintillating with diamonds. At a loss to understand Letitia's rapt concentration upon this uninspired work, I drew near with a question, and she indicated the painter's name.

It was Gustave Laroque.

"Isn't it just what might be expected of him?" said Letitia. "He's rich and famous, beginning to gather in American dollars now. I hear he's coming over next Winter with a dazzling list of orders."

We stood in silence for a moment, looking at the complacent lady

of the picture. In some indefinable way she seemed to range herself consciously as her painter's champion, the visible exponent of his standards.

"And Françoise—I wonder where in the world she is?—Wandering by devious paths, I'm afraid," Letitia murmured softly. "Poor little tortured soul!"

"Soul?" said I. "Thistledown, you mean—a thing lighter than air, made to be puffed away in a breath."

But Letitia shook her head.

"Soul," she persisted. "I shall always believe in her. She was driven, she didn't choose."

Well, I couldn't argue the point at this late date. To my mind insurmountable barriers of race and training had shut us away from Françoise, making any true understanding impossible; Letitia was convinced that a touch of nature had laid these barriers low. But here is the story, summoned out of the past by the name of Gustave Laroque.

It all happened at Barbizon—the Barbizon of twelve years ago, still unspoiled by tourist and tramway. Letitia and I had traveled from Melun on top of the stage-coach over the straight white road that lies across fields of waving grain, into the village and up to the door of the Inn of the Golden Crown. This unpretentious hostelry presented a sober front to the street, but passing through its arched doorway we found ourselves in a spacious, sunny *cour* with a delectable garden stretching beyond. Fascinated by its quaint alleys and rich bloom, we lingered among the peonies and holly-

hocks and roses until we were late at our first table d'hôte.

"There's the most beautiful face in the whole world!"

Letitia uttered the words under her breath in an ecstasy of admiration. I looked, and instantly agreed. The proposition admitted no argument, no denial; the face was beautiful, of a beauty as absolute as that of a Summer sky or a moonlit sea, as serene and unconscious. Beauty that transcended any petty art, any accident of dress—it was there, simple, perfect in itself, not seeking attention, indifferent as nature. Seen thus across the table in the heat and din of the long narrow *salle à manger*, through the flare of candles and haze of cigarette smoke, detached against a background of walls painted with grotesque and ribald figures, it had an almost unearthly quality—this clear, oval face, in its pearly purity of tint, its classic severity of outline.

Our goddess took little part in the hum of talk going on about her. Soon she rose quietly and with a comprehensive glance around the table included us all in her grave salutation, her murmured "*Mesdames, messieurs.*" Then she disappeared.

"*Une belle personne, n'est-ce pas?*" A talkative gentleman at Letitia's right caught and interpreted the gaze we sent after the retreating figure. "Madame Charvet, wife of an artist—an unknown artist, not yet arrived!" He shrugged his shoulders expressively. "*Mais il a de la chance, celui-là!*"

Letitia responded at once, eager to make use of her somewhat academic French. Always intent upon improving the occasion she would have been quite unendurable in her definiteness had she not had the gift of imagination. This saving grace protected her from a too great rigidity of attitude and occasionally led her into endearing errors of judgment.

Just now she was fairly alight. We were sitting in the garden after dinner, drinking our coffee at one of the little iron tables under the fruit-trees.

"She's wonderful, Madame Charvet

—enough to make the place interesting if there were nothing else. And especially because her type isn't French at all; it's the purest Greek, with the appropriate manner, so soft and grave, not a spark of coquetry and flippancy. She's Artemis in the flesh—or, better still, one of the Muses, Melpomene, with that melancholy slant of the eyebrows and those shadowy eyes. What an inspiration she must be to her husband! I'm crazy to talk to her."

This desire proved easy of fulfilment. Madame Charvet nodded pleasantly as we seated ourselves opposite her at *déjeuner*. She seemed to be instinctively drawn to my young companion, and when she smiled and talked the impression of austerity gave way to one of simplicity and sweetness.

"She's as transparent as a child, a perfectly lucid nature," Letitia proclaimed after a walk in the Forest of Fontainebleau with the new-made friend. "She has been married five years and is only twenty-two now. I can see her life as clearly as if she'd unrolled it before me; there's nothing in it, never has been anything but that one man Charvet."

"What about her own family, her father and mother?" I inquired practically.

"They died when she was a child and she never sees her only brother. Her husband fills her horizon completely; he's twenty years older than she is, protector, teacher, guide—everything in the world to her. Do you know, it's terrible to see such adoration! I'm not used to it—not used to such frankness of speech about it, at any rate."

Letitia sat curled up on the bed in my room. She turned her head away from me to hide the color that crept into her cheek. To the New England girl, reticent on all personal matters, Latin unreserve came as a shock.

"It's utter self-abandonment," she went on, "to care like that, to stake one's all on another human being. She counts herself nothing except in him and through him; she has the sacrificial instinct. I couldn't care for anyone like that!"

"And what does he do to deserve such worship?"

"Oh, he's always considerate, she says; he never forgets her comfort. And she has positive reverence for his genius."

"His genius! Unrecognized, then. Forty-two years old and his name not established!"

Letitia looked perplexed.

"She certainly talks as if he were a celebrity; she says he's courted everywhere. I couldn't tell what kind of work he does; she's not analytical. After all," she astutely concluded, "you and I don't by any means know the names of all the clever artists in Paris. And that Frenchman who spoke of him at dinner is an ignorant person, not an authority on art. Charvet is probably just coming to the fore."

I willingly conceded the possibility of a talent existing outside the bounds of my experience, and Letitia, fully launched upon the tide of an enthusiasm, continued:

"He's busy and prosperous, apparently. They live at Montmartre and he sends her to Barbizon every Summer while he's filling engagements in different places. He's painting a portrait at Dinard now and is coming here to join her as soon as it's finished."

In spite of some skepticism as to the historic exactitude of Madame Charvet's picturesque description of her life my own interest in her increased daily. Her tranquil dignity of demeanor had a special charm, marking her out from the artists of both sexes who came and went, filling the Inn of the Golden Crown with a clamor of racy anecdote and song, slang, and a sort of cheap and boisterous bohemianism. For Barbizon at the time was no longer the chosen habitat of genius. Its best day was over; it had not fallen to its present low estate as a mere resort for excursionists, it is true, but it had become the haunt of third-rate men in corduroy and women chiefly conspicuous for eccentricities of manner and dress, who hoped that the glamour of its name might add factitious value to their conventional studies of plain and forest.

Among this motley throng young Madame Charvet moved serenely, never losing her quiet remoteness of air which was almost stateliness. She attached herself to us, apparently finding our company more congenial to her than that of her livelier compatriots. And for some unexplained reason we felt immensely flattered by this preference.

Unreserved with me, to Letitia she opened her whole heart, telling her how the baby had died at its birth and how "monsieur"—calling him so was the one little indication of the *bourgeoise* that we ever noticed in her—had brought her to Barbizon to recover her strength, and had carried her into the forest while she was too weak to walk that she might breathe its aromatic air. And ever since that Summer she had loved it—every rocky height, every cavern, every wooded slope.

"I call it always *my forest*," she said in a satisfied tone of proprietorship. We, alien and casual, might admire it, stirred by its wild, romantic beauty, but to her it was part of life, this wonderful Fontainebleau, being associated with deep and solemn experience. At least, such was Letitia's interpretation of a modest sentiment.

As the weeks went by, Françoise—she begged us to call her by her *petit nom*—began to lose something of her calm. Twice she announced a date for her husband's arrival and twice he failed her, sending word of a change of plan at the last moment when she was wrought up to the highest pitch of joyous anticipation. It was pitiful to see the blank misery of her face on each of these occasions, misery which seemed entirely out of proportion to its cause. For what could be more natural than a painter's failure to finish his work in a given period? We were surprised that she shouldn't have accommodated herself to the irregularities of the artistic temperament, but we respected the exaggerated sensitiveness of her feeling and refrained from asking embarrassing questions as to the plans of Monsieur Charvet.

Then we couldn't help noticing the tension of her attitude whenever the

coach was due from Melun, bringing the mail. She would stand at the inn door watching the heavy vehicle as it creaked and lumbered over the rough cobblestones of the winding street, her hands tightly clasped, her lips parted in a passionate expectancy. And as Madame Roubaix, our patronne, distributed the budget among her waiting guests, Françoise would fix a wide, hungry gaze upon each letter, not attempting to disguise her bitter disappointment when none fell to her share.

At last a large square missive addressed in splashy black writing was tossed into her hands. I, close beside her, saw the light that transfigured her face as she opened it.

"Monsieur will be here tonight—tonight by the midnight coach," she said in a singing voice of concentrated ecstasy. "This time, surely, he says. His portrait is finished; he is in Paris now."

Everybody knew it, at *déjeuner*, and everybody beamed in sympathy. For they were friendly, warm-hearted folk, these French painters, sharing one another's joys and sorrows and purses, all in the same generous, irresponsible spirit. So with the announcement of Françoise's news there was a general relaxing of a rather over-strained atmospheric condition. Her utter content, her soft, subdued radiance, were contagious. We grew merry over our desert of Chasselas grapes and cream cheese, and when the genial gentleman next to Letitia rose to propose a toast to the coming of Monsieur Charvet all drank with a fervor that brought mist to the eyes of Françoise. Her hand shook as she lifted her glass.

"Come with us," I suggested. "You're too restless to be alone. We're going for a long walk, Letitia and I."

It was a golden day of late Summer. Sunshine lay brooding over the dreamy earth, the hills above Franchard were purpling with heather bloom, pines lifted their feathery tops against a sky of unfathomable blue and scented the air with the balsam of their needles. A mild west wind tempered the heat,

and we walked briskly away from Barbizon into the forest, taking a by-path among the gnarled and twisted old oaks of the Bas-Bréau.

Françoise slipped one hand through Letitia's arm and held out the other to me in the winsome, caressing way she had.

"You have been such good friends to me; I shall not forget it!"

"But you mustn't speak as if you intended to give us up because Monsieur Charvet is coming," said Letitia. "We shall still be good friends, I hope, all of us. We mean to include him."

A flush overspread the French girl's face. She hesitated a moment.

"I must explain; his name is not Charvet. Charvet is my own name. We use it when we travel, for monsieur prefers to be incognito—" She broke off, looking helplessly from one to the other of her two good friends.

I gazed straight before me, not surprised. But Letitia, all candor and romance, still had no suspicion.

"Incognito! How interesting! He must be very famous then—may we know his real name?" Thus she skated over thin ice in entire unconsciousness.

"He is Gustave Laroque," Françoise announced proudly, again at her ease. "He has a great picture at the Salon this year; he is decorated by the Legion of Honor; he has medals without number. So you will readily see that the attention he attracts is sometimes embarrassing—"

"I think it's noble in him not to care for it," said Letitia. "And what a tribute to you—that he should take your name!"

"Yes—but here at Barbizon, quiet as it is, and among artists, he may be called Laroque." And she had the relieved air of one who has clearly established a situation.

We stopped to rest at the Caverne des Brigands, then, resuming our ramble through the narrower wood-paths, we succeeded in losing ourselves completely in a tangle of verdure and mossy rocks. The sun was already low in the west and the coolness of evening was creeping into the air when

we finally emerged upon the broad Route de Paris which cuts across the forest.

"I've lost my bearings, I haven't the least idea how far we are from Barbizon," I said, straining my eyes vainly for a guide-post.

"There comes a *cavalier*: I will ask him."

Françoise's quick ears had caught the steady beat of hoofs on the hard, white road and she stepped forward to waylay the rider. A moment later he revealed himself as a young officer of artillery on a sinewy sorrel horse.

At sight of her lifted hand he instantly drew rein and dismounted. A fair sample of his kind, I thought—slim, correct, elastic, his hair cropped *en brosse*, his mustache beautifully waxed and twisted up at the ends. They made a pretty picture, he and she. He stood holding his cap and quieting the nervous animal with a firm touch while he answered her question; she had taken off her hat and carried it swinging from her arm by its ribbons, so that the late sun-rays slanted across her upturned face and burnished her brown hair. He spoke deliberately; there was a soft boldness in his look as he evidently appraised every melting curve of the graceful figure before him.

"What a little tin soldier out of a box!" Letitia irreverently remarked in English as he rode away and we walked on in the opposite direction.

"*N'est-ce pas qu'il est gentil?*" said Françoise, not understanding.

When we reached the inn Letitia came to my room in search of the Salon catalogue. I stood looking over her shoulder as she eagerly turned the pages. Yes, there was the name:

Laroque (Gustave), *né à Paris*—H. C. (Sre.) 459—*Heure dorée*.

"Oh, I remember it distinctly, don't you? A florid bacchanalian thing—how we hated it!"

In truth, the picture was not easy to forget. It was a brilliant example of audacious nudity in *plein air*, showing a woman's figure lying at full length

in a forest glade. Sunlight fell in great splotches through the autumnal leafage upon her luminous flesh; her head was pillowed on one round arm; her hair, a rich auburn, streamed about her, mingling in billows of flame with the russet and gold of fallen leaves. Virile in brushwork, riotous in color, quivering with light and atmosphere, the picture had a brutal, magnetic strength, but of imagination and poetry it showed no trace. Evidently neither nature nor womanhood held any suggestion of mystery for Monsieur Gustave Laroque; they spoke to him in the plain language of sense.

Letitia pushed the catalogue away with a sigh.

"I'm sorry; I hoped he was a different kind. The man who painted that picture can't understand anything so sensitive as she is. I shouldn't be surprised if he failed her, after all."

But the evening passed without any message of withdrawal from Laroque, and it seemed safe to assume that this time he meant to keep his word and was really on his way. The guests of the Golden Crown were wont to be early a-bed, and one by one they disappeared, bidding a cordial good night to the happy Françoise, who had declared her intention to wait in the court-yard until the arrival of the coach.

Before closing my door for the night I stepped out on the balcony to give her a last glance. In the centre of the court, over-arched by a deep starlit sky, she had placed a table with a lamp, and there she sat in the warm circle of its light, her head bent over some sewing, at woman's immemorial business of waiting the uncertain coming of man.

I lay awake, thinking. At last I heard the coach rumbling over the uneven stones. It came to a halt at the inn door; voices sounded outside. I distinguished a full, deep masculine note, a quick footstep, then a soft, smothered cry of rapture. After that, silence.

Of course we were all agog with curiosity to see the reunited pair, and no bride could have been more smilingly

conscious than Françoise when she introduced her companion vaguely as "monsieur," leaving the choice of a surname, Charvet or Laroque, entirely to our own discretion. She wore a little feminine air of pleased ownership in a thing so robustly male.

He was a superb animal, there was no doubt of that—tall, heavily built, with coarse curly black hair and full red lips parting loosely over handsome white teeth. He had a rough, careless ease of manner not devoid of charm, which sprang, we soon perceived, from an indestructible self-confidence. For he made not the slightest attempt to conceal his consciousness of his own superiority; from his pinnacle of easy mastery of his tools he could afford to look down with half-amused disdain upon the small laborious efforts of the artistic fraternity at the Inn of the Golden Crown. As for Letitia and me, his indifferent gaze rested upon us for only a moment, summed us up as Americans without consequence in our own world or any other, and passed us by. With Françoise he adopted a playful attitude, teasing her, pinching her ear, calling her "*Enfant-Fan-Fan*," and appearing to be highly diverted by her too-evident devotion to himself.

"Odious!" whispered Letitia. "How can she stand it? why doesn't she assert herself?"

But she had no thought of self-assertion; her little enslaved mind could conceive but one plan—to bind him to her by service and submission. She flushed with delight when he asked her to pose for him in the garden, and stood patiently for several hours against the weatherbeaten red door of an old well-house where the sunshine filtered through clustering vines.

When they came back into the courtyard it was plain that something had gone wrong. She was following him silently, her face somber.

"A daub—impossible to make anything of it. A wasted morning!" was his curt reply to my amiable query. With a shrug he turned the canvas toward us, showing how he had al-

ready obliterated the first blocking-in of Françoise's face by two heavy streaks of dark paint. Then, whistling some *café-chantant* air, he sauntered carelessly away.

Françoise stole up to me and laid her head against my shoulder. A tremor shook her whole frame.

"He says I am not inspiring—to a painter. He is mad about color; he wants richness and warmth. I might do for a sculptor's model, but he will never try to paint me again." And she fled, burying her face in her hands.

Then light broke upon Letitia.

"I see," she said in a low voice. "You knew, all the time, I suppose—" "I suspected it."

"And didn't tell me for fear of shocking me? You were too considerate." Nevertheless she was shaken to the depths; her face quivered with emotion. "I'm glad I've found out—I don't want things to be hidden from me. But oh, this is terrible—the humiliation of it!"

The little drama, old as the world, yet forever new in poignancy, unfolded itself with startling rapidity. Gustave Laroque stayed only three days in Barbizon. His amused unconcern of the first day stiffened on the second into a cold, calculated disregard of Françoise. He became sullen, openly pitting his will against hers. What passed between them when alone together we could readily conjecture; on his part what studied resistance—on hers what appeals, what bitterness of reproach, what vain efforts to fan the flickering flame of his desire. We saw too much; it was painfully simple and elemental; weary man looking with pitiless eyes in which passion was dead upon persistent woman whose instinct and training left her no choice but to cling. It was not pleasant to watch his light ironic smile as he twisted his weapon in her heart-strings. She hid nothing, she was as free from self-consciousness in her agony as she had been in her joy; her face grew haggard under its coating of pink-tinted powder, her lids were swollen and her cheeks stained with tears. She was absorbed in her tragedy

and all the world might see it. Pride she had none.

"Oh, doesn't she know she's taking the very worst way?" wailed Letitia. "Of course men hate a woman who cries. And to let him see that she cares! Where's her self-respect?"

Where, indeed, poor little lady? That quality, had she ever possessed it, was completely overthrown in the battle she was waging, animated only by the fierce, primitive determination to keep the thing that belonged to her.

In my hearing she uttered one heart-sick cry:

"Only five years! And he told me in the beginning that it would be forever and ever!"

Whether love or any higher feeling had part in this warfare, who could tell? Letitia firmly believed that it had. Openly, defiantly, she espoused the cause of Françoise, and from her ardent look it was clear that she felt she had discovered a mission. I could not find it in my heart to freeze the genial current of her sympathy by any chilling hint of worldly prudence. She was a Puritan, but a Puritan *de nos jours*, in whom the hereditary instinct survived as a universal tolerance, a large humanity. Her appetite for the ethical was so devouring that it must needs seek substance even in such improbable material as the heart of a pretty model from a Montmartre studio. She talked hopefully to Françoise on high themes, the joy of independence and the blessedness of work. But the girl looked at her with vague, frightened eyes.

"Work! Ah, mademoiselle, I am not like you—I do not love to work!"

The third day Laroque left. He made no adieux; he stood in the doorway, his hands thrust into his pockets, whistling, while Léon, the valet, strapped his luggage at the back of the coach. Then he swung himself into the seat by the driver and was carried away through the village and across the plain toward Melun and Paris, without a backward look. There was something peculiarly maddening in this disappearing vision of his broad, straight, competent back in its loose gray coat,

the thick crease of the sun-scorched neck showing above the collar and the careless tilt of the straw hat. What virility, energy, self-assurance! With a pang I thought of the smitten creature he had left sobbing in a darkened room.

Françoise did not appear at *déjeuner*. Letitia spent the afternoon alone with her, coming away with wet eyes.

"It's wonderful," she breathed, "wonderful to see a naked soul like that. So tender and faithful, made for love and home. She must be saved for it, she must!"

"And how do you propose to go about saving her?" said I.

"Ah, don't be flippant! I shall do it even if I take her back to Massachusetts with me—"

"And establish her as nursery governess in one of our best families, I suppose?"

Letitia was silent; there were times when she seemed lacking in humor.

"Forgive me, dear," I begged humbly, "if I can't quite see your charming protégée in the character of an efficient guide to the young."

"I'm only sorry you can't take a different tone," said she.

But in the end the inexorable logic of events relieved Letitia of all responsibility. Rain fell during the night and the next morning heavy clouds hung over the village. The thatched roofs and trellised walls lost their color and faded into a dull monotone. Swallows wheeled and circled above the roofs, then swept in a long, low flight through the street, uttering their shrill cries.

Decidedly the weather was too uncertain for sketching in the forest. I abandoned my usual work and devoted myself to writing letters indoors. Letitia was at her studies in the room adjoining mine.

Suddenly the stillness was broken by a clangorous rush and roar, a clatter of hoofs and rattle of wheels. Into the street dashed a battery from the artillery school at Fontainebleau—guns and caissons, mounted men, a flash of blue and scarlet, all the dazzling pageantry

of Mars. Dogs began to bark, chickens cackled, mothers and children ran to see, in an instant the quiet village was alive with excitement.

In the cavalcade, on his *alezan*, rode the young officer we had met in the forest, his eyes fixed upon the Inn of the Golden Crown.

Françoise was at her window. I rubbed my eyes—could it be Françoise, that glowing image of beauty and joy? She leaned far out, dressed in a pale blue negligée which showed the white

column of her throat; her lips were artificially reddened; her eyes shot sparks; over her shoulders flowed the brown torrent of her hair touched here and there with flecks of gold by a shaft of sunlight breaking suddenly through the clouds. She lifted one hand, slowly, significantly, and I knew the invitation of her gesture was seen and understood.

For the young officer turned, as Laroque had not done, for a long backward look.



LOVE

The mighty ill—SPENSER.

By John Kendrick Bangs

IF love be ill,
 If passion's thrill
 Is of disease quintessence,
 May it be mine,
 O maid divine,
 To know no convalescence.

 And, by the bye,
 May you be nigh
 At all times, dear; for, curse me,
 It were no bliss
 To suffer this
 With you not here to nurse me!



A NATURAL QUESTION

BRUDDER SMATHERS—Muh wife and a-nudder lady done th'owed rocks
 at each udder for half-an-hour, yiste'd'y, an' nobody was hurt.
BRUDDER SAGG—Bless muh soul! Wasn't dar no bystandahs?

"NON OMNIS MORIAR"

By Harriet Gaylord

DR. MINOT OSBORN was an early riser, not so much because he was imbued with the hustling spirit of New York as because he had formed the habit in his boyhood days on an up-State farm. Consequently at eight o'clock he had already finished his breakfast and was reading the paper at his office desk, when a footman brought in the letters. Methodically he sorted them into four classes, business, "G. P.'s," friends, unknown, and read them in exactly that order. Occasionally he stopped to make notes on his engagement pad and for his stenographer. The very last letter of all he regarded as the most unprepossessing. With a tolerant, whimsical, slightly bored expression on his keen face, he cut open the unquiet blue, heavily-scented envelope, and began reading indifferently. Suddenly there was a contraction of arrested attention about the muscles of his mouth and eyes. He turned to see the signature, only to find, as he had expected, that the letter was anonymous. Once, twice, he read it through carefully, and when at last he laid it down his face had grown gray and old. A sudden spasm of pain drew his hand instinctively to his heart. Quickly he opened a small bottle in the shallow front drawer of his desk and swallowed a tablet. Then he sat supporting his face in his hands till the physical agony had passed. His eyes, still dull with suffering, fell on the letterhead of his office stationery—

DR. MINOT OSBORN

DR. KEENE OSBORN

—and his face was furrowed with thought. At last he looked up to the clock and touched the bell for his man.

"Has Mr. Keene finished his breakfast?" he asked.

"He is at the table now, sir."

"Ask him to come to me directly he has finished."

Once more he read the letter, and then sat thinking until his nephew, adopted son and partner entered the room.

"Good morning, governor. Dawson said you wanted to see me?"

Keene Osborn was as stalwart and good-looking as his uncle. His face had much of the same strength and keenness, but its assurance was rather that of one whose way has been made easy than of one who has hewn out a pathway for himself. There were tell-tale lines about his eyes, not of the sort acquired by the expenditure of studious midnight oil. All this Dr. Minot Osborn remarked before he spoke.

"Good morning, Keene. Yes, I did want you. Sit down, won't you? You will be ready to go with me to the hospital at eleven for that big operation?"

"Oh, yes." The young man's face lighted with professional zeal. "If that succeeds, governor, no doctor in town can impeach your attitude."

"And you are to assist me. Is your hand steady? You look a bit seedy to me."

Keene flushed.

"I was up late last night doing foolish things, dad. But I'm perfectly fit."

"Doing foolish things?" repeated the older man. "Do you think you can afford it, Keene?"

"I hope I know my limit. That's the whole battle, you know."

"Yes, if one could be sure! I don't want to preach, my boy. We've always been comrades rather than uncle and nephew, father and son. I have believed in you wholly and trusted you, haven't I?"

"Indeed you have! And sometimes I've been worthy of your trust and sometimes I haven't. That's the truth."

"Oh, I suppose so. From the vantage ground of a physician's fifty-eight years one sees human nature as it is. One doesn't expect the impossible. Young blood is hot and temptations are many. But the point is just this—one must occasionally draw up sharply and analyze the situation. One must ask of his work, of his pleasures, his relaxations, dissipations if you will, the simple little question: 'Is it worth while?' Time is tragically limited—one must throw overboard so much which is immaterial, even detrimental, in order to accomplish the work which counts. Do I seem a prig to you, Keene?"

"Far from it, dad! You know I admire you beyond anyone on earth."

"Oh," protested Dr. Minot Osborn; "but there's Margaret!"

"No," announced Keene, with grim incisiveness, "there isn't Margaret any longer."

The older man looked at him in shocked surprise.

"My boy! since when?"

"A week ago."

"And you didn't tell me?"

"No. I—the truth is I didn't want to explain. Some time I will. Let us go back to what you were saying."

Dr. Osborn thought for a moment, then waved the matter aside.

"We were speaking of your feeling for me, Keene. I am glad you do not think me a prig. I suppose I may claim some eminence as physicians go."

"Top notch of the whole bunch, dad!" interpolated Keene.

"Very well," smiled Dr. Osborn, "you are a prejudiced observer, but we'll let that pass. I am going to give you the secret of whatever success I may have attained. Here it is: I have always striven to follow my prompt instinct to eliminate the unprofitable. I'm not sure that that isn't the secret of any man's success."

"It's well put, anyhow, dad. I shall not forget."

"Somehow," the older man smiled with almost maternal affection at his nephew, "I'm feeling a bit anxious about you, Keene. We've been pecu-

liarly alone for twenty years, you and I, since your father and my wife died. You couldn't be more to me if you were my own son. Now we are brother physicians and partners. I have always tried to stand for what is highest in the profession. In the course of things I must die and leave the name and work to you. A physician is bound to put the best stuff he's got in him into his work unless he's a poltroon. We are scheduled for saving men's bodies; it humbles me sometimes to realize that we do almost more for men's souls. We've got to have in order to give; we've got to be before we can do. I think you realize this, Keene?"

"I do, governor, when I stop to think. You are playing Hamlet to my conscience with a vengeance. 'Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul!'"

"I want to, Keene. When a man has lived for his work, has staked everything he is or hopes to be on the structure he has reared, it is unspeakably gratifying to be able to say, 'I die, but my lifework lives on in my son! *Non omnis moriar!*'"

Keene's face was very serious, his uncle's luminous. They gazed at each other until both the demand of the one and the vow of the other were registered in high heaven.

"You don't need to speak, my boy," said Dr. Osborn at last, gravely. "It's all right."

He moved in his chair and the tension of the interview was over.

"By the way, Keene," he said, "this has been in my mind to say to you for a long time, but it was precipitated this morning by an unpleasant communication"—he smiled deprecatingly—"from a highly scented individual. You'd better read it, I think, though the anonymous writer implored secrecy after the absurdity of her kind." He raised the letter gingerly from his desk. "Really," he went on, "I'm surprised you haven't noticed the presence of this missive. 'It smells to heaven!'"

At sight of the blue envelope, Keene started and frowned.

"Has she dared to write you, too, dad? Why, that's the trouble with Mar-

garet. She wrote her. It's the spiteful revenge of a scorned woman—that's all."

"Read it, please."

Keene flushed deeply as he obeyed, his uncle watching him closely meanwhile.

"That does put me in a nasty light, doesn't it?" he declared grimly. "The worst of it is one can't stop a woman's tongue. If she were a man, I'd soon find a way."

"I think perhaps we have just decided on the best way possible," said Dr. Osborn quietly. "At your age it is not hard to live down a past. How much of that is true, please?"

"Most of it, though it's put in the worst possible form for me."

"Even the gambling?"

"Yes."

"How about knowing one's limit?"

"One has to exceed it sometimes at first, to find just where it lies, dad."

"Yes, that's true. Have you found your bearings?"

"I think you have shown them to me. The past is dead, I hope."

"Very well, my boy, I more than hope—I believe. Now how about Margaret?"

Keene's face set sternly.

"Could anyone blame her?" he asked.

"No, I suppose not. But you are to be blamed if you acquiesce. It is only a small part of you which rioted so shamefully. You know and I know that you are a man! Margaret is worth a good fight. She is young and therefore intolerant. Youth draws only sharp distinctions."

"Dad, you're a brick! Think of your taking it like this. Most fathers would have rowed me out of the house."

Dr. Osborn smiled whimsically.

"It's all in having a sense of proportion. A man with a chin like yours is bound to win out. Have a talk with Margaret and get her to take you back on probation. It will flatter her youthful desire to be a reformer—and the love of a girl like that is no mean inspiration for a man."

"You're dead right, dad," said Keene gravely.

"Good luck, then!" Dr. Osborn turned to his papers. Then he put out his hand and gripped Keene's. "We'll meet at the hospital. I'd like you to be with the patient during the etherization."

"All right, governor, and thank you!"

Promptly at eleven Dr. Minot Osborn entered the operating theatre. The case had been widely heralded, and the marble tiers of seats were crowded with visiting physicians, students and nurses. Keene and two young internes were to assist him in performing an intricate and almost unprecedented operation, the only hope of saving the man's life. The faces of the onlookers were correspondingly serious and intent. Dr. Osborn asked a question or two of the head nurse, then taking the record from an orderly and referring from time to time to the notes, he lectured on the previous history of the case.

The man was brought in and placed on the table. Keene took his position opposite his uncle. The older and younger physicians looked singularly alike in their sterile gowns, and with their faces aglow with professional zeal. Dr. Osborn lectured as he worked, until the critical point in the operation was reached. Then a breathless silence fell in the room, broken only by the drip of water and the sharp click of steel instruments.

Just as Dr. Osborn raised his hand to make the final delicate incision on which the success of the operation depended, a sudden grayness spread over his face. He alone knew what that grayness involved.

"Keene! quick!" he gasped, and held out his scalpel, then sank, an inert heap, on the floor.

Keene's voice broke the shocked, suspended silence, clear, calm, reassuring.

"Take Dr. Osborn out at once and give him restoratives," he said to the orderlies. "Dr. Warren"—he spoke to a physician in the audience—"will you go to my uncle, please? Dr. Marshall"—to one of the internes—"you will assist me."

The pause in the operation was only one of seconds. Taking his uncle's place instantly, controlling his nerves, forbidding heart or thoughts to follow that lifeless form, speaking as if nothing had happened when he found it necessary to explain his movements, the young doctor went on with his uncle's work, displaying unbelievable skill and dexterity and holding the breathless, shocked interest of the spectators tense and absorbed.

Only when the last stitch had been taken with every promise of success, the last bandage carefully applied, did a gasp of awful relief pass through the audience as if it came involuntarily from one heart. Keene drew a deep breath, flashed one stricken, awakening glance over their faces, then turned and hurried from the room.

"Where is he?" he demanded.

In silence an orderly pointed to the doctors' dressing-room. At sight of him Dr. Warren and a nurse stepped outside and let Keene enter alone.

The gray agony on the face of the man lying on the couch had passed, and Keene gazed down on the marble peace of his dead.

When he came out again Dr. Warren was waiting. Keene's control was still perfect.

"Did he regain consciousness?" he asked.

"For one moment only. His eyes opened and when I leaned down to catch his words he whispered, 'Keene—finish—work.' I assured him you were going on with the operation. Then his heart ceased to beat."

The tears sprang to Keene's eyes at last.

"He meant more than that, Dr. Warren. How is it possible to finish the work of such as he?"

Dr. Osborn's own physician came hurrying down the corridor.

"Where is he?" he also demanded.

"It's all over, Dr. Cameron," said Keene quietly. "Why did you never warn me?"

Dr. Cameron wrung the young man's hand.

"I wanted to, Keene," he said, "but

your uncle wouldn't hear of it. It has been impending for months. He wouldn't have had it come otherwise than in the course of the day's work, I think." A gleam came in the old doctor's eyes. "They tell me you finished the operation as if nothing had occurred, Keene."

"Of course."

"Then I don't think your uncle had much to regret. You are a hero, sir!"

"And you praise a man for being decent after living with that man for twenty years!" protested Keene reproachfully.

That night when everything had been done that could be done Keene sat in the library by the side of his dead, appraising the past, realizing the present, trying to focus the future.

A footman entered silently with cards on his tray.

"Are they waiting below?" asked Keene, after a surprised scrutiny.

"Yes, Mr. Keene."

"I will come down."

When the door had closed he stood looking at the calm face.

"It's Margaret, dear old dad," he whispered. "She wouldn't let me bear it alone. Aren't you glad, governor? Tell me!"

Then he turned away and went downstairs.

Margaret's father stood waiting in the hall below, and gripped Keene's hand.

"My boy," he said, "I have no words to tell you how I sympathize with you, or how I admire your heroism today. Let Margaret speak for us both. She made me bring her to you." He pointed to the reception-room door. "I'll step into the office and wait."

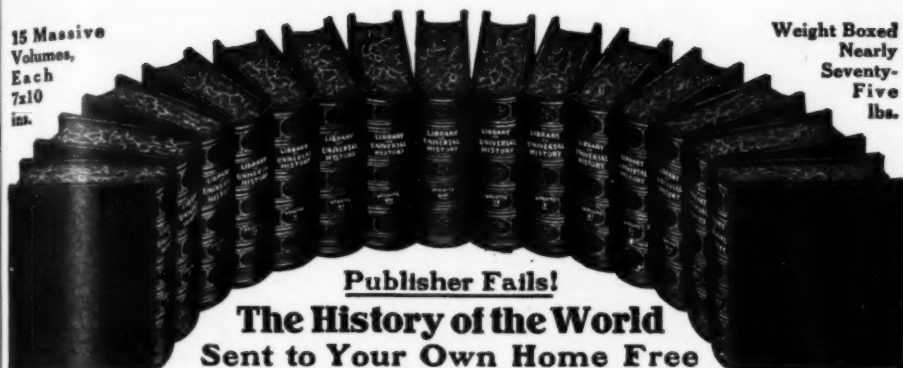
No words were spoken when Keene entered the room. Only Margaret came straight to his arms.

Afterward when he came upstairs again he stood once more looking down at the magnificent marble face.

"It's all right, governor, all right!" he said. "I have Margaret and I have your wonderful life. You won't altogether die!"

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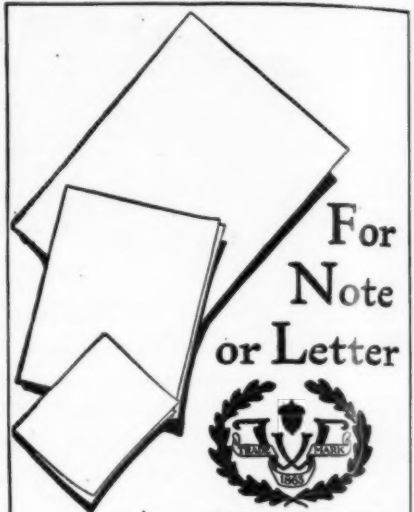
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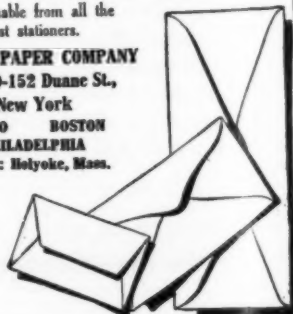
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(Concluded on page 14)

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Italian cars, the winner an Isotta made in Milan and Cedrino a Fiat made in Turin. Strang, an American, won in a car of Italy, and Cedrino, an Italian, was beaten. America therefore gained sterling honors from the contest, as it claimed the winner and third, fourth and several other places.

To the victor belongs the spoils and the victory of Strang and his mechanic, J. B. Marquise, gave rewards of thousands of dollars and honors far greater, inasmuch as their services were at once in demand for the Grand Prix race, the classic race of France, to be held in July on the Dieppe Circuit. The pair could not drive a foreign car and America rejoices in their having taken over an American car, the Thomas, for the French race.

It would not be right to say that winning races with Louis Strang, who is more than ever in the public eye now since his second great victory, is business, for he may never win again. There are so very many drivers in the world, and all good ones, some European, some American and others from every clime. The element of luck enters the field of automobile racing from the moment the starter says "Go!" So very many things are likely to happen, so many little things that will waste the precious minutes that mean victory perhaps or loss perhaps. Strang credits his mechanic with saving those minutes which meant victory to him. Marquise did not ask Strang to stop the car for brake troubles, but while the car was traveling along over the rough roads Marquise climbed down on the run board and, lying clear over, tightened the brakes which had worn out through frequent application rounding the innumerable turns. Again a strap came loose and Marquise climbed down with a jack-knife in his teeth, and while the car bounded along over the hummocks and leaped from thank-you-mum to thank-you-mum, the daring mechanic tightened that strap. A stop for either of these repairs might have lost to the winner those precious moments which, gathered up by the timing of Marquise brought ultimate victory. True, Strang did not drive at top speed, preferring to take a long chance and fight for the supremacy, providing it was necessary to fight. His level-headed way of figuring out the proposition was commended after the race, but during the first lap of the contest it brought condemnation on his head from many interested in him and from his fellow competitors. Starting fourth, three minutes back of the first driver, Sartori, two minutes behind the great Cedrino and one minute behind Herbert Lytle, who won one of the Savannah races, Strang went right out for the lead. The course was foggy and driving at great speed was dangerous for some, but not so much so to Strang, with his great knowledge of the course. Having lived on the route for weeks where others enjoyed a comparatively few days of training, the young American was better posted and his foreknowledge gave him the advantage. He caught Lytle and then Sartori near East View, and then Cedrino near the Pleasantville turn, after which the course was clear sailing. Hard driving added a few minutes to the score, and after that with a perfect running car and little likelihood of tire trouble, owing to every turn being negotiated easily, the race was won with average care.

It must be understood, in speaking of this great victory, that a good car, safe tires and a great head are necessary with any driver. Strang was taught a lesson at Savannah through what might be termed an accident. Harding, an Isotta driver also, met with misfortune while training for the Savannah race, and Mr. Tyson loaned Strang and his car to Mr. C. M. Hamilton to replace Harding and his car. Strang, who had started preparation for the Briarcliff race, with snow on the ground, took the trip to the South, determined to take no chances and to reserve his car for the more important race. With no opportunity for training at Savannah he started in the face of predictions that he would never come through. These predictions came from a general reputation for recklessness enjoyed, but not deserved altogether, by the youngster. With a promise to be careful he made the 300-mile run, turning corners at a ridiculously slow speed and forcing the speed only in the stretches. With never a stop on account of tire trouble, which is usually caused by too rapid turnings of the corners, he gained the lead quite early in the contest and then increased that lead to very nearly a lap, winning a great victory. The experience was valuable and the Savannah winner started in the Briarcliff, determined first to gain the lead in that first lap and then to adopt the Savannah policy, holding his car in at the corners and letting it out only in the straights. When his average of 46.15 miles per hour is considered he made wonderful speed, for few, if any, had thought better than forty miles per hour would be made. With about ninety turns in 32.4 miles, high speed was a question at all times and Strang makes the assertion that in some stretches he reached eighty-five miles per hour, a seemingly impossible feat, and yet a speed that was practically necessary to make the average.

Of the twenty-two cars that started in the great race, eighteen were still running when the race finished, a truly remarkable record, and in addition to the five credited with having finished there were eleven who were running their last lap and one other car still running. Only two cars had actually gone wrong in the contest, a record never before known in such a contest.

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